Creating a Native Space in the City:
An Inupiaq Community in Song and Dance

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements ........................................................................................................ i

Table of Contents .......................................................................................................... iii

List of Illustrations ....................................................................................................... v

Abstract ........................................................................................................................ vi

Introduction ................................................................................................................... 1
  Pualanaqsiah! Let’s Dance! .......................................................................................... 1
  Atiğa (“I am named after…”): Introduction ............................................................... 4
Objective ........................................................................................................................... 6
Orientation ...................................................................................................................... 7
  Terminology ................................................................................................................ 8
  Inupiatun: Notes on Inupiaq Language Usage ............................................................ 11
Literature Review .......................................................................................................... 11
Methodology ................................................................................................................... 22
Study Overview ............................................................................................................. 28

Chapter 1. Aipanitaq inûlliq: Old Stories ............................................................... 31
  1.1 Aipanitaq inûlliq: Old Stories ............................................................................. 32
  1.2 American Influences ......................................................................................... 37
  1.3 Healing ................................................................................................................. 63

Chapter 2. Qazgi: Community Center ................................................................. 70
  2.1 CITC in the City: Monday Night Practices ......................................................... 71
  2.2 Qazgi: Community House ................................................................................. 76
  2.3 Community ......................................................................................................... 87
    2.3.1 Diaspora ........................................................................................................ 90
    2.3.2 Cosmobility .................................................................................................. 95
    2.3.3 Deterioralization .......................................................................................... 96
    2.3.4 Urbanization ................................................................................................ 97
    2.3.5 Native Hubs ................................................................................................. 100
  2.4 Sounds of Practice ............................................................................................ 104
    2.4.1 Soundscape .................................................................................................. 105
    2.4.2 Sounds of Singing—Tone ................................................................. 108
    2.4.3 Sounds of Singing—Pitch .......................................................................... 115
    2.4.4 Sounds of Singing—Vocables .............................................................. 117
    2.4.5 Sounds of Drumming ................................................................................ 120
    2.4.6 Sounds of Drums—Drum Making ....................................................... 123
    2.4.7 Acoustemology ....................................................................................... 126
  2.5 Aggi: Dance ....................................................................................................... 127
Chapter 2. Invitational Dances ................................................................. 128

2.5.1 Invitational Dances ........................................................................... 128
2.5.2 Motion Dances ................................................................................ 132

Chapter 2. Ilisaġvik: Place of Learning, Creating ........................................ 136

2.6 Ilisaġvik: Place of Learning, Creating ................................................. 136

2.6.1 Learning ......................................................................................... 138
2.6.2 Composing .................................................................................. 145

Chapter 3. Moveable Qazgit ..................................................................... 156

3.1 Historic Inupiaq Travel and Temporary Qazgit ..................................... 157

3.1.1 Ancestral Travels .......................................................................... 158
3.1.2 Moveable Qazgit ............................................................................ 169

3.2 Performance ....................................................................................... 178

3.2.1 Performing in Anchorage ............................................................... 181
3.2.2 Public Events ................................................................................ 182
3.2.2.1 Authenticity ............................................................................... 188
3.2.2.2 Identity ..................................................................................... 194
3.2.2.3 Indigenizing the City ................................................................. 195
3.2.3 Semi-Private Events ...................................................................... 200
3.2.3.1 Spirituality ............................................................................... 202

3.3 Traveling to perform .......................................................................... 210

3.3.1 Fairbanks—WEIO: Competition Element ...................................... 212
3.3.2 Wales—Kingikmiut Dance Festival ............................................... 216
3.3.2.1 Ownership of Songs .................................................................. 220
3.3.2.2 Shared Songs ........................................................................... 222
3.3.2.3 Changes .................................................................................... 226
3.3.2.4 Nostalgia ................................................................................ 228
3.3.2.5 Constructing a Sense of Place .................................................. 230

Puviglealuq: Tail, Coda ............................................................................ 234

Greater Qazgi Movement ....................................................................... 237
Future Research .................................................................................... 240

References ............................................................................................. 244
List of Illustrations

**Figure 1.** Hawkes, Ernest William. *The Dance Festivals of the Alaskan Eskimo* (1914). Plate XII ................................................................. 173

**Figure 2.** Hawkes, Ernest William. *The Dance Festivals of the Alaskan Eskimo* (1914). Plate XIII ........................................................................................................... 174

**Figure 3.** Cantwell, John C. “Indian Keshagem. (Dance-House.)” Image from plate 64 ff. “A Narrative Account of the Exploration of the Kowak River, Alaska” ....... 176

**Figure 4.** Cantwell, John C. “Natives at Rendezvous Near Icy Cape, Alaska.” Image from plate 84 ff. “A Narrative Account of the Exploration of the Kowak River, Alaska” ........................................................................................................................................ 177

**Figure 5.** Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage perform at the Alaska Native Heritage Center. Photo by Heidi Senungetuk, April 2016 ....................... 186

**Figure 6.** “Man’s frock.” Murdoch, John. *Ethnological Results of the Point Barrow Expedition* (1892, 113) .................................................................................................................. 191

**Figure 7.** Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage. Photograph by Heidi Senungetuk, December 2016 ................................................................. 191
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Abstract

Building on oral histories and primary sources that document early Inupiaq music and dance activities, as well as documenting current activities of an urban Inupiaq dance group, this dissertation presents the author's insider's view of how urban Inupiat privilege Native ways of knowing through music and dance to maintain relationships with their ancestors. Since the late nineteenth century, Arctic explorers, missionaries, and administrators have described Inupiaq music and dance in documents ranging from government reports to memoirs. In addition to portrayals of ceremonial dance events held in traditional community houses, called qazgit, these early accounts describe how Inupiat traveled to festivals and trade fairs, where they would construct temporary qazgit to hold ceremonial dances wherever they went. Today, following guidance provided by elders, an urban Inupiaq dance community emulates their ancestors’ habits as they live and practice their village’s style of performing arts within an Americanized city in Alaska. Instead of creating a traditional qazgi structure in the city, these practical people carved out space to practice in an office building where they cultivate the essence of a village qazgi by continuing and extending the ways of their ancestors in how they practice song accompanied by drumming and dance, resulting in an Inupiaq acoustemology that reflects an egalitarian society. The traditional Inupiaq ways of the qazgi are extended
through the ways they transfer knowledge and create new works for the group. The
dance group travels to perform in a variety of venues throughout the city and in other
regions of the state, evoking ancestral ways of employing moveable qazgit by
creating musical spaces for ceremonial dance. Through their performances for the
wider community, the group experiences questions of authenticity and identity, and
by building connections with urban audiences participates in creating a sense of
“Indigenizing the city.” Certain performance events evoke competitive elements, and
simultaneously build interconnectivity with other dance groups from the larger
Inupiaq community, while attendance at a village festival is driven by nostalgia. For
urban Inupiat, practicing their culture of traditional music and dance is a way of
maintaining relationships with their ancestral village.
Introduction

Pualanaqsiah! Let’s Dance!

On a beautiful sunny fall day in 2015, the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage assembled to perform traditional Inupiaq songs and dances at a luncheon gathering held at the Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association building in Anchorage. It was a luncheon held to recognize adoptive parents of Alaska Native children and to bring them together to network with one another. Organization leaders gave several opening speeches, after which a buffet lunch was to be served. The tables were loaded with traditional Native foods such as dried fish, muktuk (whale skin and blubber), herring eggs, and wild blueberries, served alongside pizza, fried chicken, and cake. But before participants lined up to help themselves, an elder from my dance group stood up to give a blessing and a prayer. Sophie Tungwenuk Nothstine briefly spoke in her Kingikmiut dialect of Inupiaq language, and then translated what she said. The part that stuck in my mind went something like this: “I am thankful today that I can speak my Native language, I am thankful I can wear my Native clothes, I am thankful I can sing and dance in my Native way. It wasn’t always like this.” She ended her prayer with a blessing over the foods we were about to partake, and a blessing on our gathering in general. “Niġinazhigaa, pualanaqsiah! Time to eat, let’s dance!”

One part of Sophie’s prayer stuck in my mind for a long time. It wasn’t always like this. I have heard Sophie and other elders say this sort of thing before, statements that allude to a darker period of Alaska Native history. It was a period
when organizations such as schools and churches disapproved of Native dance and music, language, and dress, casting shame on those who continued to practice Native ways of living, in favor of promoting assimilationist agendas and assertion of American values and worldviews. These kinds of allusions to dark periods in our histories often seem to be brief, as if our elders were to say, “it was like that, but now you don’t have to worry so much.” I am appreciative that the elders look out for us, as if to protect us from the hard times. But then again, I began to wonder, what was it like? More specifically, what were our ancestors’ experiences with colonization like when they intersected with music and dance? And how do the present performance habits of the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage relate to historical activities of our ancestors?

That particular fall day, the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage brought an element of the qazgi, or community house, to this luncheon meeting. With gloved hands, they danced to songs they sang with drum accompaniment: songs about picking greens, songs about hunting for seals, herding reindeer, fishing for flounders, and chopping wood to prepare for the coming winter. Their voices filled the room, they beat their drums together, and their dance movements told the stories of the way of life in their ancestral village. Their brief performance gave way to conversation, nourishment, and children playing, as dance group members made their way back to work or study in other parts of the city. This performance took place in a private situation, not for a tourist audience, but for a gathering of our own Alaska Native peoples, invited people who were taking steps to create Native spaces for children and
families in Anchorage. The organizers could have held the luncheon without adding any cultural performance element, and it might have been a delightful time with food and conversation. Now, thankful that we can determine for ourselves once again, we bring dance and music to private luncheon events as a way of sounding together in synchrony, a way of feeling oneness with others, even without having to say much with words. In my mind, a brief cultural performance transforms a luncheon event into a sort of qazgi, a traditional community house, right here in the city. This qazgi acts on so many different levels: not only is it a place for confirming identity and bringing people together, but it also creates spaces for wellness and healing, education, and reflection.

Today the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage perform in different venues all around Anchorage, for public and private events. Kingikmiut are Inupiat with ancestral ties to the village of Kingigin, also known as the Native Village of Wales, located at the westernmost tip of the Seward Peninsula of Alaska. The members of this group choose to live in Anchorage, and have created a dance group to practice traditional Inupiaq music and dance in an urban setting. Their performance events reflect essences of historic traditional dance events held in the village qazgit,\(^1\) or community houses. Traditionally, a qazgi\(^2\) was a place for education, worship, entertainment, and workshop (J. E. Senungetuk 1982, 50; Molly Lee and Reinhardt 2003, 108–10). Today, without such a domicile for a permanent qazgi, Kingikmiut

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\(^1\) Qazgi (singular), qazgit (plural).

\(^2\) I prefer to use the spelling qazgi, used by Kathleen Lopp Smith in her introduction to Ice Window, which she attributes to the orthography of the Alaska Native Language Center of the University of Alaska Fairbanks (Lopp Smith and Smith 2001, 10).
living in Anchorage improvise by using meeting rooms in a tribal office building for weekly practice space. In recent years, the dance group’s performances have been popping up in various locations throughout Anchorage, depending on invitations to perform for different organizations and events. Thus, I suggest the idea of “moveable qazgit,” with Kingikmiut bringing the values of the qazgi throughout the city and to other parts of the state, creating spaces to educate, entertain, and communicate with each other and with the wider community.

As our elders have taught us, we can be thankful that today we can dance in our Native ways. As we further embrace our traditional knowledge and adapt it to fit our lifestyles in the city, we are changing the landscape of Anchorage, by creating Native spaces, pockets of qazgi, and welcoming places for our community.

**Atiġa ("I am named after…"): Introduction**

“Where are you from?” Alaska Native peoples often ask this question of each other as a means of introduction, as a way to find connections with one another through common family members or friends. Where someone is from also indicates an association with a Native nation, and in this way perhaps infers the question “who are you from?” Identifying one’s relations and associations is not only polite but also an important custom to Alaska Native peoples, who historically depended on relationships for trade opportunities and land use rights (Burch 2013, 85–97). For me, my “Native” answer is, “Atiġa Heidi Aklaseaq Senungetuk,” meaning “I am Heidi

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3 I follow Ernest Burch’s use of the term “nation” to refer to socioterritorial units of Inupiaq peoples of northwest Alaska (Burch 1994a, 5:1, 1998, 8, 2006, 7).
Aklaseaq Senungetuk,” and that I was named after my paternal grandmother, Aklaseok, and my paternal grandfather, Senungetuk, by my father, Ron Senungetuk, who is from Wales, Alaska. This place is also known as the Cape Prince of Wales, named thusly by the British explorer Captain James Cook in 1778 on his third world voyage (Cook 1999, 568), and also known by its Inupiaq place name, Kingigin (Ray 1975, 13). The people of Kingigin call themselves “Kingikmiut” in their Kingikmiut dialect of the Inupiaq language, which means “the people of Kingigin” (see Ray 1975, 106).

However, my more “American” answer to the question “where are you from” is that I grew up in Fairbanks. Fairbanks is Alaska’s second largest city, located in its Interior region, in Athabascan ancestral homelands. My father, Ron Senungetuk, founded and directed the Native Art Center at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) in 1965. Prior to that my Norwegian mother, Turid Senungetuk, met my father when they both attended the Statens Håndværks og Kunstindustriskole art school in Oslo, Norway, where he was a visiting Fulbright scholar. As I was growing up in Fairbanks, my parents assured that I participated in school and in extra-curricular activities with other children, including ballet classes, Girl Scouts activities, and violin lessons. As a violinist I performed with youth orchestras throughout elementary school, and with the Fairbanks Symphony Orchestra and the Arctic Chamber Orchestra.  

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4 In literature, there are many spelling variations for Kingigin, including: Kinegan (H. R. Thornton 1931, 1), Kingegan (Bernardi 1912), Kingetkin (J. E. Senungetuk 1982, 16), Kigigmen, Kigin Eliat, King-a-ghe, King-a-ghee, Kingigumute, Kymgovei, Kyngovei, Kyng-Myn, Kymyntsy (Ray 1975, 293). Kawerak, Inc., the regional non-profit Native corporation organized under ANCSA, currently uses the spelling Kingigin (Kawerak, Inc. 2012).
Orchestra during high school. I was one of a handful of Inupiaq children in my school’s class in Fairbanks. I would attend the annual Festival of Native Arts on the campus of UAF or the World Eskimo-Indian Olympics festival and admire the dance performances by visiting cultural groups from Native villages. As a child, there was no consistent social space for me to learn about my Inupiaq culture and language, except at home, which was rich with a mix of Inupiaq, Norwegian, and American ideas and languages. Eventually I studied violin performance in conservatory settings in Ohio and Michigan, and made my way as a violinist in symphony orchestras in Louisiana and Oklahoma, and finally as a violin teacher back in Alaska. It is important to acknowledge my upbringing in Fairbanks to disclose where I come from, and my early associations in performing arts, because I feel each facet affects the way I see, hear, and understand music: I am Inupiaq, I spent a great deal of my life as a classical violinist, and currently I assert my interest in being a learner of Inupiaq cultures. I came to realize as an adult that there are a growing number of people like me, who were raised in urban centers, and want to know more about their Alaska Native cultural heritages. When I moved back to Alaska, I joined the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage, in order to learn more about the performative traditions of my father and grandparents.

**Objective**

The purpose of this research is to explore how an Inupiaq dance group creates Native spaces in an Americanized city in Alaska. By examining a number of scenes,
from practice sessions to public and semi-public performance spaces, as well as incorporating individual profiles, oral histories, and historical eyewitness accounts, this work considers issues of diaspora, soundscape, nostalgia, authenticity, identity, and Native ways of learning and teaching expressed by an Indigenous performing arts group that creates a sense of community through music and dance. Using mimetic dance motions combined with ancestral and newly composed songs with drum accompaniment, this group negotiates living in a colonized society while maintaining and extending ideas of traditional music and dance. The resulting study presents a portrait of a small group of urban Inupiat who exemplify a community of contemporary Indigenous modernity.

Orientation

This section serves to orient the reader to the terminology and published literature related to the subject of Inupiaq music and dance and issues of research in its Indigenous communities. Terminology associated with Indigenous peoples in Alaska, including endonyms, tribal names, and colonizers’ appellations, often overlap, creating contentious issues related to identity, so it may be useful to readers to help sort out their usage in related literature. Included is a brief explanation of the use of Kingikmiut Inupiaq language terminology, Inupiatun. Next, a brief review of related literature will situate this dissertation within the state of scholarship available at this time. I present a brief discussion of literature related to Indigenous
methodologies that have helped inform this dissertation. An overview introduces the body of study.

**Terminology**

A short primer on terminology and names is in order. Generic umbrella terms such as “Indigenous,” “Native,” “Alaska Native,” and “Native American,” are tolerated and used in conventional language to refer to Indigenous peoples of Alaska, even though they are words with derogatory connotations of colonial thought that were created to distinguish cultural “others” from Europeans or Euro-Americans (Maria Shaa Tlåa Williams 2009, 4; Huhndorf 2009, xiii; Hamill 2012, 4–5). Following Johnson et al. (2007) and Panelli (2008), the words “Indigenous,” “Aboriginal,” and “Native” are capitalized both as nouns and adjectives, to be consistent with capitalization practices for European and American identities and nations (unless quoting the work of other authors). “Alaska Native” (with capital letters) is a term generally used, both as a noun and as an adjective, to distinguish Alaska’s Indigenous peoples from settlers of the wider community, who may have been born in Alaska, and who may be referred to as “native Alaskan” or “Alaskan native.”

In order to denote the diversity of Alaska’s Indigenous peoples, scholars have used language labels to designate regional Alaska Native groups. The word *Inupiaq* describes the language, and is the singular and adjectival form of the word *Inupiat*,
which means “real people” (J. E. Senungetuk 1982, 9; Hensley 2009, 235). Inupiaq traditional homelands extend from the southern coast of the Seward Peninsula up to the coastal regions of the North Slope of Alaska to the Mackenzie River in Canada. While the Inupiaq languages and cultural homelands cover a vast geographical area, anthropologist Ernest Burch suggests conceiving of Inupiaq peoples as having many Inupiaq nations. Burch’s Inupiaq collaborators explained that each Inupiaq community developed its own language dialect and variations on cultural ways of living, and are not “one people who happened to be spread out among different villages” (Burch 1998, 8–12, 2006, 3–8). Therefore, it is proper to refer to the endonym of specific Inupiaq nations, such as Kingikmiut (“People of Kingigin”) or Ugiuvangmiut (“People of Ugiuvak”).

Outsiders’ words for naming Indigenous peoples of Alaska, such as “Eskimo,” have rooted themselves in English language literature about Indigenous peoples in the region, and indeed in the language of Alaska Native peoples themselves. Anthropologist Mark Nuttall notes that the usage of the word “Eskimo” in the English language dates back to 1584, when English writer Richard Hakluyt used it in his Discourse on Western Planting in a discussion about the peoples of eastern North America (Nuttall 2005, 579–80). That the word “Eskimo” has been in use in the English language for over four hundred years shows how adherent a word can

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5 There are also variations in the use of the tilde in the word Inupiaq. According to Erica Hill in her introduction to E. Burch (2013), dialects of North Slope and Northwest Coast of Alaska use the tilde [ñ] sound in pronouncing Iñupiaq. However, Seward Peninsula and Bering Strait Inupiaq dialects do not use or pronounce the tilde [ñ], thus the spelling is Inupiaq. Hill also points out that Inupiat (without the tilde) is used to refer to speakers of all dialects of Inupiaq language, both Iñupiaq and Inupiaq (Hill 2013, xxv).
become. Nuttall recognizes the popular notion that the word “Eskimo” may have been derived from Indigenous Algonquian language usage of eastern North America, assuming derogatory inflections for their neighbors to the north. Nuttall also explains other theories, such as one suggested by William Thalbitzer: the word “Eskimo” may derive from the word “excommuniquois,” a term Jesuit priests used to refer to the non-converted Indigenous peoples in eastern Canada (Nuttall 2005, 580; also referenced in Damas 1984, 5). Nuttall observes the Oxford English Dictionary definition of the word “Eskimo” that includes Indigenous peoples of “northern Canada, Alaska, Greenland, and eastern Siberia” (579), which points to a tendency for European and Euro-American researchers and writers to group peoples from wide geographical areas together under a single appellation, regardless of how the people might see themselves. In Alaska, the word “Eskimo” is used in literature to refer to Inupiaq peoples of northwest and northern Alaska and Yup’ik peoples of southwest Alaska, Indigenous peoples that have distinct cultures and languages. In 2010, the Inuit Circumpolar Council passed a resolution that asked researchers to use the word “Inuit” (an Inupiaq word meaning “people”) instead of “Eskimo” in research publications and related documents (Lynge 2010). Locally, some Inupiat still like to use the word “Eskimo,” and suggest its use as a form of resistance, as Indigenous people are taking it “back” and using it to reflect the hardships of living a life of suppression and alienation in a colonized society.

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6 Yupiit means “real people” (plural form of yuk, “a person”). Yup’ik is the adjectival form, and Yugtun, the name of the language (John 2010, 2).
Inupiaq is not my primary language, but I heard it spoken at home as a child, along with Norwegian, while our main spoken common language was some form of American English. Currently I attend Iñupiaq language-learning group in Anchorage with other interested adults and their children and grandchildren who learn from language experts and elders. I use Inupiatun (Inupiaq language) to introduce topics, as a way of invoking awareness of Inupiaq ways of thinking, for topical areas within this dissertation, and to reflect part of my learning processes. As suggested earlier, there are different dialects of Inupiaq languages and thus different orthographies appear throughout literature depending on the intent and region of origin. Since I learned from my elders who grew up speaking the Kingikmiut dialect of Inupiaq languages, I give preference to Kingikmiut dialect spelling and usage variations.

Literature Review

In order to situate this dissertation amidst scholarly works, this section is an overview of important sources that focus on music and dance of Indigenous peoples of Alaska. Some scholars have alluded to a dearth of published information about Alaska Native music and dance, especially in regards to Inupiaq styles (Lantis 1947, ix; T. F. Johnston 1976b, 1; Fox 2014, 528). Other scholars have noticed that there are even fewer authors who use an Indigenous approach to discuss Alaska Native performing arts in Alaska (Maria Shaa Tláa Williams 2009, 257; J. B. Perea 2011, 6).
But in essence, these authors along with others have contributed to a small body of literature that regards Alaska Native music and dance that spans over the course of a century. Many of the earliest visitors and settlers in Alaska who were European, Russian, or Euro-American explorers, teachers, and anthropologists mention dance and music amidst descriptions of daily activities of Inupiat (see Nelson 1983; Thornton 1931; Lopp Smith and Smith 2001; Corbin 2000; Chance 1966; Ray 1975; Bernardi 1912), but these accounts can be revealing as to insights into early musical and dance practices. The following authors have contributed works that specifically address Indigenous music and dance in Alaska.

In 1913 anthropologist Ernest William Hawkes published a monograph with his observations of *The “Inviting-In” Feast of the Alaskan Eskimo*. Hawkes was a government teacher in the Central Yup’ik village of St. Michael in 1911-1912, and also taught school in the Inupiaq village on Diomede Island for two years. In 1912, Hawkes attended a festival called the *Aithúkaguk* (“Inviting-In”) feast, which he calls “a native festival which had not, to my knowledge, been witnessed by scientific observers before” (Hawkes 1913, 1). Hawkes gives his general impressions of the dances at the festival, and presents photographs of several dance masks used in this region. Hawkes occasionally compares Inupiaq and Yup’ik dancing styles, and even suggests comparisons to traditional dance festivals he witnessed in Greenland. Hawkes expanded his understanding of dance festivals in his next publication titled *The Dance Festivals of the Alaskan Eskimos* (Hawkes 1914), which includes more
detailed observations of Inupiaq dance styles. Hawkes’ publications are important among the earliest descriptions of music and dance in northwestern Alaska.

In the article titled “Eskimo Music in Northern Alaska,” early anthropologist Diamond Jenness describes the vocal music accompanied by drums in northern Alaska. Jenness reveals his ethnocentric discontent with Inupiaq performative arts, drawing attention to the “nasal intonation running through them all which was not altogether pleasing” (Jenness 1922, 377). He proceeds to provide musical transcriptions of a few songs, using standard European musical notation, along with suggestions for “harmonizing” the music for the pipe organ. However, with a careful reading through his article one can find details of value. For instance, Jenness indicates his awareness of the practice of continually composing new dance songs: “the dance-songs or ‘topical’ songs, which rise suddenly and flourish for a season, then drop back into oblivion” (Jenness 1922, 377) attests to a tradition of constant creation. Jenness contributed a shorter piece to the *Anthropological Papers of the University of Alaska* (Jenness 1953), which includes his observations and descriptions of the use of the drum in dance houses in Nome, Wales, Point Hope and Utqiaġvik (Barrow)\(^7\) from his visits in 1912 and 1913.

Starting in 1927, Father Bernard Hubbard visited different parts of Alaska, leading annual scientific expeditions under the auspices of Santa Clara (California) University for the next thirty years. He spent nearly a year on King Island in 1937-1938, where he took photographs, silent video, and audio recordings of Ugiuvangmiut

\(^7\) The community of Utqiaġvik formally changed its name from Barrow on December 1, 2016 (Grove Oliver 2017).
Inupiat in daily life. Hubbard brought audio engineer Ed Levin with him, and together they recorded songs, dances, and discussions with Ugiuvangmiut King Islanders. The original films and audio recordings were deposited at the Smithsonian Human Studies Film Archives in Suitland, Maryland (Hubbard, S.J. 1937). In 2000, ethnomusicologist Maria Williams began a project to interview Ugiuvangmiut King Island elders to identify dancers and singers in the original footage (M. Williams and Hubbard, S.J. 2000). The original Hubbard video and audio provide valuable historical insight into the sounds of the Ugiuvangmiut King Island community.

Music collector Laura Boulton visited Utqiaġvik (Barrow) for a week in 1946 and brought audio recording equipment. Several songs were recorded and included in the published recording *The Eskimos of Hudson Bay and Alaska* (Boulton 1955). Boulton’s book *The Music Hunter: The Autobiography of a Career* (Boulton 1969) introduces details of her travels and impressions of music around the world, including a chapter dedicated to her trip to Alaska. Boulton’s recording collection had been deposited in archives at Columbia University, where she held an office as a curator of collections. Anthropologist Aaron Fox addresses Boulton’s story and her early recordings in his article “Repatriation as Reanimation Through Reciprocity” (Fox 2014). Here, Fox describes the process of reintroducing Boulton’s recordings to current members of the Utqiaġvik community, which resulted in the animation of songs that had been in disuse for sixty years.

From 1949 to 1950 Norwegian explorer Helge Ingstad visited Anaktuvuk Pass, Alaska, and recorded 141 songs, mostly of Nunamiut (inland Inupiat) from the
area, but also included songs from Diomede Island, Herschel Island, Point Hope, and Point Barrow (Nuvuk). Ingstad’s recordings were transcribed by Norwegian composer Eivind Groven and published in Norwegian as *Eskimomelodier Fra Alaska: Studier Over Tonesystemer Og Rytmer (Helge Ingstads Samling Av Opptak Fra Nunamiut)* (Ingstad and Groven 1956). In 1998 Sigvald Tveit republished ninety-seven of Ingstad’s recordings in digital format in *Songs of the Nunamiut* (Tveit and Ingstad 1998). These historical documents provide insight into the sounds of mid-twentieth century Alaskan Inuit.

In 1961 and 1963, Miriam Stryker recorded song performances on St. Lawrence Island in the villages of Gambell and Savoonga. Her recordings were published by Folkways Records as *Eskimo Songs from Alaska* (Stryker 1966). She includes a booklet with short descriptions of her visits to the island. This recording adds a valuable connection to the sounds of St. Lawrence Island music in the mid-twentieth century.

Lorraine Donoghue Koranda was professor of music at the University of Alaska Fairbanks from the late 1940s through 1964. During that time she recorded performances from over forty musicians from across the Arctic region and produced the audio record *Alaskan Eskimo Songs and Stories* (Koranda 1972). In the booklet accompanying this recording, Koranda states her intent to “preserve, document, and transcribe such material, which surely cannot long survive acculturation and the passing of those elderly informants who still recall the rituals and musical practices of the past” (Koranda 1966a, preface). Thus far, Inupiaq peoples have proved her
prediction of cultural survival wrong, but her recordings are still appreciated as access to the sound of previous generations of singers. Her essay includes her descriptions of general characteristics of Inupiaq music across Alaska, and she also provides detailed information and transcriptions of many of the songs presented in the recording. Koranda’s chapter “Music of the Alaskan Eskimos” appears in the textbook Musics of Many Cultures: An Introduction (Koranda 1980). Here, Koranda presents her understanding of Inupiaq music categorized into regional styles, supported with transcriptions of musical examples from several villages.

Thomas F. Johnston was the resident ethnomusicologist at the University of Alaska Fairbanks from the 1970s to the 1990s. His survey Eskimo Music By Region: A Comparative Circumpolar Study (T. F. Johnston 1976b) presents generalized descriptions of music by region. He devotes multiple chapters to “Northwest Alaska,” indicating a region from St. Lawrence Island to the MacKenzie Delta in Canada, and includes separate sections about Canadian and Greenlandic music and dance. Johnston published numerous scholarly articles over two decades. Several of these articles address vitalization of the practice of cultural arts in Alaska (T. F. Johnston 1978, 1990). Johnston also created or contributed to books designed to help primary and secondary teachers bring Inupiaq and Yup’ik dance and music curricula to public school classrooms (T. F. Johnston et al. 1979; T. F. Johnston and Pulu 1980; Gray et al. 1979). Johnston’s video recording (T. Johnston and Wassillie 1977) highlights the Frankson family of Point Hope as they demonstrate several Inupiaq dances and songs. This video coordinates with the book Iñupiat Aggisit Atuuniqich:
*Iñupiat Dance Songs* (1979), which provides musical transcriptions and song descriptions. Since the Frankson family demonstrates shared dances from several villages (including King Island, Diomede, and Wales), this valuable resource is still in use as reference by dance groups today.

Up to this point in the twentieth century, scholarly works have been presented from outsiders’ perspectives of Inupiaq cultures. Most of these authors spent short periods of time visiting Native communities, and often made general observations about regional styles of music and dance. The next five authors are important in that they are the first to bring their Indigenous knowledge to their scholarly works. Maria Shaa Tláa Williams (Tlingit), Deanna Paniataaq Kingston (Ugiuvangmiut Inupiaq), Theresa Arevgaq John (Yup’ik), Jessica Bissett Perea (Dena’ina), and Mique’l Dangeli (Tsimshian) wrote dissertations that address Alaska Native or Canadian music and dance, each using their Indigenous perspectives to access and analyze performative arts in Alaska and Canada.

Maria Williams’ ethnomusicological dissertation “Alaska Native Music and Dance: the Spirit of Survival” from the University of California, Los Angeles (M. D. P. Williams 1996) presents a review of the history and pressures generated by colonial systems introduced across Alaska, followed by a survey of the renaissance of Alaska Native cultural pride revealed in music and dance since the passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) of 1971. Williams’ work provides an overview of Alaska Native styles of dance and music, and includes extensive interviews with Indigenous specialists in performative arts. With this work, Williams
set the tone for discussing Alaska Native performance arts within a political setting. Williams also contributes a brief article about Alaska Native music and dance to the book *Native American Dance* (Maria Shaa Tláa Williams 1992), placing Alaska Native performance arts in the context of North American Indian cultural arts. She was also the general editor for *The Alaska Native Reader* (Maria Shaa Tláa Williams 2009), an important volume that contains multiple articles written by Alaska Native scholars, artists, and musicians.

Deanna Paniataaq Kingston’s anthropological dissertation from the University of Alaska Fairbanks, “Returning: Twentieth Century Performances of the King Island Wolf Dance” (D. M. Kingston 1999), examines the “Wolf Dance” as revived by the Ugiuvangmiut King Island Native community in the 1980s and early 1990s. Kingston describes the theatrical drama in her introduction, noting that much preparation goes into making costumes and practicing the accompanying music and dance. While the Wolf Dance was suppressed by colonial influences in the early twentieth century, its survival is an example of a modern adaptation by Inupiaq people. Kingston also contributed several important articles that address issues of trade, songs, kinship, and family relations in Inupiaq communities, especially as expressed by Ugiuvangmiut Inupiat (D. M. Kingston 2000; D. M. Kingston, Koyuk, and Mayac 2001; D. Kingston 2005; D. P. Kingston, Koyuk, and Mayac 2007; D. P. Kingston 2009; D. Kingston and Marino 2010).

Theresa Arevgaq John’s dissertation, titled “*Yuraryarput Kangiit-llu: Our Ways of Dance and Their Meanings*” (John 2010), sets out to describe music and
dance in Central Yup’ik cultures from an insider’s perspective and how music and dance play a role in organizing and maintaining Yup’ik societal infrastructures. John was among the first scholars to graduate with a PhD from the Indigenous Studies program at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, where the students are able to embrace and employ Indigenous methodologies in their research. The fact that John used music and dance to focus her study shows the importance of performance arts in Alaska Native societies, and that music and dance is not just considered a “pastime” or entertainment as in other societies. John also contributed to the extensive book *Yupiit Yuraryarait: Yup’ik Ways of Dancing* (Fienup-Riordan, John, and Barker 2010), which serves as an exemplary reference for Central Yup’ik dance and music styles.

Musicologist Jessica Bissett Perea writes about the politics of “qualifying” as Alaska Native in her dissertation from the University of California, Los Angeles titled “The Politics of Inuit Musical Modernities in Alaska” (J. B. Perea 2011). Perea examines the stories and histories of several Alaska Native musicians, including members of the Yup’ik/Greenlandic and self-described “Tribal Funk” band *Pamyua*, and challenges ideas of stereotyped identity through sound, music, and dance. She provokes readers to examine ideas stemming from colonial establishments of “blood quantum” and transposes the concept into musical sound, or in her words, “sound quantum.” Perea continues this idea in her article “Pamyua’s Akutaq: Traditions of Modern Inuit Modalities in Alaska” (J. B. Perea 2012).
Through the principal lens of art history and theory, scholar Mique’l Dangeli examines how Northwest Coast First Nations dance artists enact protocol in their performances, while simultaneously enact what she calls “dancing sovereignty,” in her dissertation titled “Dancing Sovereignty: Protocol and Politics in Northwest Coast First Nations Dance” from the University of British Columbia (Dangeli 2015). Dangeli examines traditional styles of dance intersecting with contemporary music and dance in artistic collaborative works and intersecting with symphony orchestras and chamber groups and other non-native musicians in the urban setting of Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Dangeli writes, “I demonstrate that practices of dancing sovereignty generate politically charged relationscapes among Northwest Coast First Nations dance artists, their territories, other First Nations, and non-Indigenous collaborators” (Dangeli 2015, iii). Dangeli challenges the fields of art history and anthropology to include movement and sound in the classification of “Northwest Coast art,” evoking a more holistic approach to Native ways of knowing.

A few more scholars from the wider community have recently added their perspectives about music and dance in Alaska. Folklorist Susan Fair’s article “The Inupiaq Eskimo Messenger Feast: Celebration, Demise, and Possibility” (Fair 2000) details the music, dance, and ceremonies of the Messenger Feast, and covers a broad range of styles of the Messenger Feast from Nelson Island Yupiit to Inupiat of Utqiagvik. For his PhD in Interdisciplinary Studies at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, Paul Krejci addresses historical representations of musical impressions of Alaska Natives by colonial explorers, commercial whalers, traders, and missionaries
in “Skin Drums, Squeeze Boxes, Fiddles and Phonographs: Musical Interaction in the Western Arctic, Late 18th Through Early 20th Centuries” (Krejci 2010). This study focuses on ways that Euro-American popular music in the late 19th and early 20th centuries reflected settler and visitor perceptions of northern Indigenous peoples through sheet music written for Euro-American instruments and voice, piano rolls, and recordings, and conversely, how Indigenous peoples incorporated Euro-American ideas into their performative cultures.

Two other scholars, Chie Sakakibara and Hiroko Ikuta, published articles related to music and dance in Inupiaq communities, studied through the disciplines of geography and social anthropology, respectively. Sakakibara’s article “No Whale, No Music: Iñupiaq Drumming and Global Warming” (C. Sakakibara 2009) examines how Inupiat of the communities of Utqiaġvik and Point Hope cope with climate change and its effects on traditional whaling cycles, with a specific focus on spiritual and physical ties to the bowhead whale, as expressed through music and dance. Sakakibara details many aspects of the drum, the dance, and the dance festivals associated with subsistence activities of whaling that drives these two communities. Ikuta offers a different focus in her article “Embodied Knowledge, Relations with the Environment, and Political Negotiation: St. Lawrence Island Yupik and Iñupiaq Dance in Alaska” (Ikuta 2011). Ikuta outlines ways that Yupiit and Inupiat represent relationships with human and non-human beings through dance and music.

For thousands of years, people have lived in the Arctic conditions of the North Pacific region, and cultivated performance arts as a means of expression and as a
means of unification of societies. This review of literature related to Inupiaq music and dance confirms a fairly limited body of scholarly works, even though it represents over a century of scholarship. Several authors presented in this overview have revealed their “outsider” perspectives through their inquiries and observations about Indigenous music and dance. A few scholars have started to contribute to a bibliography of works that stems from Indigenous points of view, bringing their understanding of Native cultures to academia. There are no recent comprehensive studies that specifically address Inupiaq performative arts, especially something comparable to *Yupiit Yuraryarait: Yup’ik Ways of Dancing* (Fienup-Riordan, John, and Barker 2010), which serves as a text that is specific to Central Yup’ik music and dance. None of the major studies have addressed contemporary urban traditional Inupiaq music and dance. There is space to address Inupiaq performative arts from Indigenous points of view, to consider the importance of this art form to the people, place, and time we live in.

**Methodology**

The next section is a brief overview of literature related to Indigenous methodologies that have helped to shape the body of this work. Maori professor Linda Tuhiwai Smith has become known for her book *Decolonizing Methodologies* (L. T. Smith 2012), in which she presents her opening statement where she criticizes the idea of “research,” especially when considering contexts between Indigenous peoples and institutions that carry out research. She uncovers how imperial entities
have used research as a tool for asserting power over their Indigenous “subjects” for centuries. One of my goals is to show how research from an Indigenous perspective can be an empowering tool for the people involved. From another perspective, Margaret Kovach, in her book *Indigenous Methodologies*, notes the very words “Indigenous methodology” have been contested, as they infer a deference to Euro-centric ways of research by using a qualifying adjective (Kovach 2009, 20). Why can’t Indigenous methods be just as valid without separating them from Euro-American methods? In the end she elected to use the term in the plural sense, to indicate the multiplicity of Indigenous points of view, which adds yet another layer to her word choices. Challenging the idea of the necessity of assimilating to Euro-American standards of “research,” Smith, Kovach and other Indigenous authors have been contributing to the processes of redefining research, using concepts and methods that stem from Indigenous communities and their ways of knowing.

In his book *A Yupiaq Worldview* (Kawagley 1995), Angayuqaq Oscar Kawagley, professor of education at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, recognizes his own Yup’ik perspectives within a setting that has experienced both benefits and disruptions from colonial powers and influences, and he puts his Yup’ik worldview at the center of his work, as theory. He recognizes the idea of “Yuuyaraq,” the way of the human being, as a central concept in Yup’ik worldviews, which is also inherently connected to human, natural, and spiritual realms. His aim is to connect Indigenous worldviews with Euro-American educational methods used in public schools. This early work from an Alaska Native scholar sets the tone for including Native ways of
knowing in research and scholarly works. I bring Inupiaq worldviews to the center of this work in a similar fashion, and concurrently engage issues of ethnomusicological studies to examine their locations within larger contexts.

With the title of his article, Alutiiq anthropologist Sven Haakanson, Jr. asks, “Can There Be Such a Thing as a Native Anthropologist?” (S. Haakanson, Jr. 2001). He challenges queries of whether a researcher can carry out “objective” work if he is a cultural “insider,” and points out the simple fact that a Native person can learn about his or her own culture through an academic lens. “Is not the whole purpose of research to learn, including the exploration of different approaches to knowing (hermeneutics)? If Natives cannot write from both Native and scientific perspectives then what is the purpose of doing anthropology?” (S. Haakanson, Jr. 2001, 79). I approach this dissertation with a similar attitude: through the research associated with this dissertation I have learned a great deal about Inupiaq cultures of the past and the present. Haakanson’s dissertation (Sven David Haakanson, Jr. 2000) discusses emic and etic assessments of archaeological evidence among Nenets of the Yamal Peninsula of northern Russia.

In Mapping the Americas, Native American studies scholar Shari Huhndorf (Yup’ik) asks the question, “what happens to American studies if you put Native studies at the center?” (Huhndorf 2009, 3). By centering or focusing historical accounts to view them from Indigenous perspectives, one can begin to create a sense of balance with the works that take heavily Euro-centric viewpoints. Huhndorf examines “the history” of the United States’ purchase of Alaska in 1867, but
considers the ironies of the expansionist attitudes of manifest destiny as seen through Native eyes, including examples of colonial rules of land use rights, place names, literature, and cultures. In the body of my dissertation I engage Indigenous perspectives by presenting visual, oral, and written Indigenous literatures, in conjunction with outsiders’ views presented by early explorers and researchers, to create a balanced interpretation of Inupiaq dance and music.

Ethnomusicologist Beverley Diamond examines “re-” words in her article “‘Re’Thinking: Revitalization, Return, and Reconciliation in Contemporary Indigenous Expressive Culture” (Diamond 2012), including the words research, remembering, recognition, and revitalization. To Diamond, the use of “re” as a prefix in these and other words reveals the linear concept of time embedded in the English language, indicating a past and a present action, whereas Native perceptions of time may include the past and the future within the present tense. “Is the ‘re’ necessary all the time?...The ‘re’ [in revitalization] implied that the cultures were not vital” (Diamond 2012, 123). Choosing words carefully can be an act of solidarity, and Diamond’s observations inspire me to choose words carefully. Diamond has also contributed a body of works that support honoring Indigenous points of view (Diamond 2005, 2007, 2008; Hoefnagels and Diamond 2012; Diamond 2014). I appreciate Diamond’s approaches to contemporary Indigenous expressions and conceptions of expressions, and continue to learn from her philosophies.

In this dissertation, I call upon ideas from these and other scholars to present an Indigenous point of view of Inupiaq music and dance. While many Alaska Natives
have incorporated various forms of Euro-American assimilation into their daily lives,
I believe that Inupiaq values continue to be at the forefront of Inupiaq worldviews,
especially when it comes to cultural activities such as music and dance. Rather than
blindly following ethnomusicological methods for the sake of producing a study
about a little-known performance art, I present their traditional music and dance the
way Inupiaq peoples understand it, use it, and create it. At the same time, as a scholar,
I am not averse to using academic lenses, such as historical or anthropological
accounts, to learn about aspects of my own culture. But by putting Native studies at
the forefront of each account or analysis in this work, my intention is to center
ethnomusicological methods to include Indigenous perspectives. I choose my topics
as well as my words carefully to invoke Native ways of being within this dissertation.

In addition to surveying ethnographic literature and audio- or audio-visual
recorded historical sources, I joined the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of
Anchorage to learn how contemporary Inupiat carry on their cultural heritage in an
Americanized city. During weekly practice sessions I learned to sing many songs
with the group. I began to study and practice the intricate dance moves and symbolic
meanings associated with each song. On occasion the men would allow me to sit in
the drum line, and I tried my hand at the sauyuk. I joined in as many community
performances as possible, including trips to Fairbanks to perform for the World
Eskimo-Indian Olympics festival and to the Native Village of Wales to participate in
the Kingikmiut Dance Festival. I became the group’s secretary for their quarterly
business meetings. I appreciate the group’s willingness to share their knowledge with
me and with each other, especially input from our elders, including Cecilia P (Nunooruk) Smith, Ruth Angnaboogok Koenig, Reba Tungwenuk Dickson, and Sophie Tungwenuk Nothstine. With the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage, I learned not only how to dance and sing, but also how to learn using Kingikmiut ways in an Inupiaq space. Joining the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage allowed me to understand some of the processes of learning and performing music and dance that are not always visible to the outside world. I established long-term affiliations with musicians and dancers with members of the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage (many of whom are my distant family relations) and also with musicians and dancers of other dance groups through frequent participation in festivals or cultural gatherings. With the rapport built over time I was able to carry out interviews with experts of Inupiaq music and dance. The information I learned through these experiences not only guided my research but also reinforced what I had learned from written and recorded materials.

As ethnomusicologist Michelle Kisliuk suggests, “we get to know other people by making ourselves known to them, and through them to know ourselves again, in a continuous cycle” (Kisliuk 2008, 187). Genuinely, I feel I have learned about myself by taking the time to study the current and historical issues of Kingikmiut through music and dance, including information about my heritage as well as challenging my abilities to learn music and dance styles that have been less familiar to me until recently. However, for me, drawing a distinction between “other people,” as in people “in the field,” where fieldwork is usually carried out, and
“home,” is harder to discern, as for me, they are the same space. In his dissertation, musicologist John-Carlos Perea discusses the idea of fieldwork with ethnomusicologist David McAllester. The elder scholar suggests that in the hands of Native musicologists, “American Indian ethnomusicology will be ‘homework’ rather than ‘fieldwork’” (J.-C. Perea 2009, 133). Perhaps, as Jessica Bissett Perea discusses in her dissertation, one could consider the idea of “rootsicology,” as suggested by musicologist Richard Taruskin—the study of one’s own ethnic heritage (J. B. Perea 2011, 3–4). I suggest that at times I consider my own learning processes and understanding of Kingikmiut music and dance as I would consider those of another member of the dance group, and therefore I write with a certain amount of reflexivity, including my personal perspectives. Regardless of a label, the fact remains that I write from the perspective of being a part of the group I write about—an Indigenous person living in Alaska’s largest city, practicing ancestral music and dance every week, performing throughout the year, together with my elders and ancestors of the future.

**Study Overview**

This work serves to inform readers about the complexities and significance of performative arts in Inupiaq life in the current era. Indigenous peoples of Alaska use music and dance as a way to connect to a sense of place, to a sense of community, and also to remind the wider community that we are still here, and we continue to maintain connections with our ancestral ways of life, even as transposed into urban
The following chapters introduce the workings of the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage. Chapter 1 provides a brief introduction to the oral histories of Kingikmiut cultural performing arts, eyewitness accounts and events leading to the cessation of Kingikmiut dancing, and the idea of healing from historical trauma. Chapter 2 examines the idea of the *qazgi* as a place of learning, practicing, and creating community, both in a historical sense, and as it is experienced in the present time in an urban setting. A Kingikmiut community in Anchorage brings up issues including ideas of diaspora, cosmobility, deterritorialization, urbanization, and the idea of “Native hubs.” An analysis of the activities of the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage during their regular practice sessions reveals the soundscape, the sounds of singing, drumming, and the resultant acoustemology of the group. The dance motions that accompany the music also reveal how Kingikmiut follow a structured system within improvisatory dance motions for invitational dances, and maintain oral history as told through embodied ethnographies of choreographed motion dances. They follow traditional ways of teaching and learning at their home *qazgi,* and extend their ideas when creating new songs for the group.

Chapter 3 presents the idea of the “moveable *qazgi,*” or the vitalization of ancestral methods of creating temporary dance houses while traveling away from home. Performances away from the “home *qazgi*” include local performances at other locations within the Anchorage area and group travel to perform at events outside of Anchorage. Issues that arise in connection with public and semi-public performances include authenticity, identity, and spirituality. Performances at festivals by the
Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage introduces issues of competition, song ownership, shared songs, changes, nostalgia, and creating a sense of place. The final section, “Puviqlealuq: Tail, Coda,” offers some final thoughts.
Before the onset of colonization in Alaska, Inupiat practiced music and dance in their own ways, for their own purposes. Since Inupiaq history has not been a written history until the twentieth century, but rather oral history passed from one generation to the next, primary documents that testify to Kingikmiut music and dance from an Indigenous point of view are rare. That does not mean their oral history is non-existent. As Ørnulv Vorren suggests, “If Alaska’s indigenous peoples’ rich oral tradition were documented, their history, written from their perspective, would comprise immense volumes (and the period of colonization would be only a short episode)” (Vorren 1994, 9). Presented here are a few oral histories from Inupiat of the Seward Peninsula region, written in the twentieth century, providing an impression of music and dance as it was before American influences began to cause the cessation of dance practice in Wales, as it did in so many villages throughout Alaska. Often, newcomers to the region, including travelers of the American whaling industry, teachers, administrators, and government officials, painted their own pictures with descriptions that often indicate their misunderstandings of the cultures, rather than attempts at making bridges of understanding. An examination of primary sources and witness accounts describing negative biases toward Native music and dance will begin to show the tremendous pressures Alaska Native peoples have withstood in
terms of cultural survival, and have recently begun to implement wellness and healing practices using cultural arts as tools for recovery.

1.1 *Aipanitaq inülliq: Old Stories*

I have heard stories about Inupiaq drumming and singing all my life, mostly from my father, Ron Senungetuk, but also from relatives and family friends who visited from time to time throughout my childhood. My father called them *Aipanitaq inülliq*, “old stories,” in his version of Kingikmiut dialect of the Inupiaq language. In more recent times, I hear an olio of stories from participants of the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage in casual situations, often regarding “old-style dancing.” Prior to the introduction of Euro-American style education in the 1890s, and well into the present day, Inupiaq history was passed from generation to generation, person to person, without written sources. Often stories were (and still are) embedded in songs and dances themselves (see section 2.5.2 Motion Dances), or in the decorative arts of material objects, such as tools, clothing, or other items such as tattoos (Fair 1995). Oral histories began to be preserved in written form in the twentieth century, from individuals who thought it important to perpetuate their perspectives. A short introduction to Inupiaq music and dance from oral histories serves to orient the reader to Kingikmiut performance arts, followed by a discussion of the histories leading to the cessation of dance practice in the mid-twentieth century.

William Oquilluk was born in 1896 in Point Hope, Alaska, of parents who hailed from Kauwerak, a region of the interior Seward Peninsula. At age seven,
Oquilluk and his parents returned to their homeland, where he was raised in a traditional fashion, by grandparents, with his parents nearby. This allowed him to learn oral histories from people who experienced an era before the impacts of Christian missionaries in Alaska (Oquilluk 1973, v). As a young man, Oquilluk began writing down the stories he learned from his grandparents, but the papers were lost in a house fire. Later, as an elder, he began again, this time with assistance from Laurel Bland, who was interested in helping newly formed Native rights organizations to establish land rights through oral histories (Oquilluk 1973, viii). The resultant memoir *People of Kauwerak* (Oquilluk 1973) has many mentions of the use of singing and drumming throughout, especially in conjunction with *aŋatku*, or spiritual healers, and in conjunction with dance festivals by the community. Here, Oquilluk discusses reasons for dancing:

Eskimos danced for many reasons. The aungautguhks had special dances and songs for using their spirits. Some people would make songs and dances to tell stories or to let other people have enjoyment. Sometimes people danced because they were happy and felt like it. A man or a woman would sing and maybe someone else would dance for that song. Then other people would try that dance. The Eagle-Wolf Dance was the first time a special dance happened when certain masks and other things were used that always stayed the same every time the dance was done. That was because this dance was to help the eagle’s spirit to return to his mother. (Oquilluk 1973, 102)

Oquilluk’s testimony paints a picture of a time when people danced and shared songs together at a moment’s notice, and when masks were used openly in affiliation with dance. He recognizes that an *aŋatkuq* would use music to call out spirits. He speaks of the origins of the Eagle-Wolf Dance, an epic dramatic dance event that lasted for

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8 *Aŋatkuq* (singular) *aŋatkur* (plural).
days. Deanna Kingston’s dissertation (D. M. Kingston 1999) addresses the more recent but rare performances of the Wolf Dance created by the Ugiuvangmiut King Island community in 1982 and 1991.

In the 1930s, Michael Francis Kazingnuk reflected about life in Wales and Little Diomede Island in a manuscript, now conserved in archives at the Alaska State Library. An article in the *Alaska Dispatch News*, Kazingnuk’s granddaughter Etta Tall reveals that Kazingnuk was born on Big Diomede Island a little before 1900 (Swann 2016). On a private *facebook* social media page, local people have recently been discussing their memories of Kazingnuk. They remember him as a friendly old man, and they say his mother was from Wales and his father from Big Diomede Island (field notes, Feb. 16, 2014). In his manuscript, Kazingnuk discusses preparations for a dance festival in Wales:

I see dancing limit is four days. Sometimes in middle winter, Cape Prince of Wales Eskimos they sent two men up to the Mary’s Egloo also. Invited their customers to come down to Wales Alaska and have a Dance. And ordered what they want. Furs or Dry fish or fresh frozen fish or all kinds of berries. I seen both of Cape Prince of Wales and Mary’s Egloo Eskimos prepared their Dancing customs or dancing material. Prepared songs. Drum. Gathered up all kinds of Grub. Good thinks to eat. Hunting, keep busy, prepared for Big Dance, just like due to Christmas or Happy New Years preparation takes about one month. After one month over or passed whole army of Mary Egloo come down to Cape Prince of Wales…Customers would take inviters Kazkie and system of dances and possessions. Then Wales inviters would to dance first. (Kazingnuk 1937, 141-2)

Kazingnuk’s description shows how much preparation went into a festival, including practicing songs, making their drums just right, and collecting and preparing party foods and gifts for their guests. It must have been an exciting time to have visitors
come from another village, as he equates the festival to major American holidays. In some ways, this description is not that divergent from the preparations for current festivals (see section 3.3.2 Wales—Kingikmiut Dance Festival).

Roger Menadelook was a student at the Alaska Agricultural College and School of Mines in Fairbanks\(^9\) beginning in 1928, six years after the opening of the academy (R. K. Menadelook 2013, 101). He published an article in the university newspaper, the *Farthest-North Collegian*, titled “Eskimo Life on Diomede Island” (1929). His first-hand account describes dances in the *qazgi*:

In former times when food was plentiful, dances and feasts were held in the “Kozgi.” The singers sit on the floor with drums in their hands. The dancers occupy the middle of the floor. The Eskimo dance differs from English or white man dances in that men and women dance separately. The dancers swing their arms and stamp their feet in time to the drum beats. (R. Menadelook 1929, 10)

While Roger Menadelook’s article describes musical life on Little Diomede Island, the island is located in the middle of the Bering Strait, with Big Diomede immediately to the west, and the mainland of Cape Prince of Wales just over twenty miles to the east. Aware of Euro-American couples dancing that was popular at the time, Menadelook compares the styles, drawing attention to the idea that Inupiaq dance styles do not require one to pair up. Later in his article he concedes that Inupiaq dances were already becoming a rare event, and “the only time one sees them is when the natives congregate in one place, as when they go to Nome in the summer to trade” (R. Menadelook 1929, 11). Menadelook’s descriptive essay provides details of

\(^9\) Alaska Agricultural College and School of Mines in Fairbanks accepted its first students in 1922, and changed its name to the University of Alaska in 1935 (University of Alaska Fairbanks 2016).
everyday life in Diomede in the 1920s, including hunting, gathering, games, and trading with Siberian travelers and with U.S. Government supply ships.

In addition to teaching duties, the early missionaries in Alaska also contributed descriptive reports that provide insights into what they witnessed before their missionizing messages took root. Some reports were official, while others were intended to be more private in nature. In 1892, one of the first teachers in Wales, Thomas Lopp, recorded in a private diary a description of a dance ceremony in a qazgi in Wales:

Chief Kokituk, according to promise made last year, sent Tom word to attend Kosga and see Oomaligzruk speared. Went down about 2:40. Kosga full. Few women and children. Lamps burning brightly. Sat over one. Oomaligzruk talking about spirits in Siberian dialect. Roof or ceiling decorated with wooden images—whales, walrus, birds, seals and boat. An old-fashioned whale spear suspended, 8 ft. long. Oomaligzruk talked Siberian to Nagedlena and two or three other old men who understood a little of the language. Doctor [shaman] Ibiono drummed and had vision about whale hunting. Doctor Peneret and Alureruk, 4 Drumapaths. Whaling crew of 8 young men, pants, and Kawituk danced in circle. Each had wooden masks. Splendid dancing. (Lopp Smith and Smith 2001, 369)

Lopp describes a multi-lingual experience with visitors from Siberia that seemed to be easily transcended through drumming and dancing. Lopp’s description includes early views of a qazgi decorated with icons hanging from the ceiling, which is rare in the current era. Similar to Oquilluk’s description, Lopp also mentions the use of masks by each dancer, which practice has fallen out of fashion except for a few dances of today. Lopp’s observation of few women and children in a qazgi that was full indicates a ceremony dominated by men. Lopp includes mention of men who had visions of whaling in combination with drumming, indicating the spiritual aspect of
the event. Lopp points out how eight young men of the whaling crew danced together in solidarity, presumably in preparation for whale hunting as the vision predicted. Lopp’s early description of the activities of the qazgi correlates with the early histories provided by Oquilluk, Kazingnuk, and Roger Menadelook, and simultaneously establishes that the people of Kingigin welcomed him to participate in their most formal activities.

1.2 American Influences

As Yup’ik/Native American Studies scholar Shari Huhndorf points out in her book Mapping the Americas (2009), the acquisition of Alaska as a territory of the United States in 1867 as purchase from Russia presented a problem, in that the U.S. purchased a large territory full of people. Alaska Natives were not considered citizens by the U.S. government at the time, and their allegiance was questionable as former subjects of Russia. Were these people who came with the newly purchased land going to be a hindrance to the goal of expansionism? How were the leaders of the United States going to bring these new non-citizens of “uncivilized tribes” (Case and Voluck 2012, 63) to accept a new form of government? Huhndorf writes, “Although nationhood depended in theory on fundamental similarities that preexisted the inclusion of new territories, in the case of Alaska incorporation involved creating such similarities for the sake of establishing colonial control, a process that unfolded in intersecting political, economic, and cultural realms” (Huhndorf 2009, 36). America wanted to develop a homogeneous population with fundamental similarities
using cultural education to instill allegiance and a new nationalist agenda in its newly acquired peoples.

The responsibility to intersect cultural realms in the name of colonial control was defined by the Organic Act of 1884, which provided the Bureau of Education $25,000 to set up schools for all children in the Territory of Alaska. Sheldon Jackson, a Presbyterian minister, was hired as the general agent for education. He made a plan to share expenses between the Bureau of Education and church missionary organizations, a policy of mixing church and state that was contentious amongst government officials at the time, according to historian Dorothy Jean Ray (Ray 1975, 207), but also common practice, especially in regards to the education of Native Americans, according to the research of Maria Williams (Maria Sháa Tláa Williams 2009, 153). Jackson’s “comity agreement” worked out a plan to assign a variety of church denominations to develop mission schools throughout Alaska with the goal of “civilizing” Alaska Natives, which meant teaching English language skills and on a larger scale recreating the spiritual landscape in a Christian viewpoint (Burch 1994b, 84). The new educational policy would have deep repercussions throughout Alaska, resulting in the widespread loss of Indigenous languages, loss of cultural knowledge, and the loss of music and dance practices that were seen as devil worship by many missionary teachers. Reports from early administrators, teachers, and other newcomers to Alaska repeatedly reveal ethnocentric and racist attitudes directed at dismantling Native cultures (Maria Sháa Tláa Williams 2009, 154).
In the spring of 1890, Sheldon Jackson put out a call for mission teachers through the American Missionary Association to serve at the Cape Prince of Wales, Point Hope, and Point Barrow. By June, he had selected four teachers, two who would serve in Wales—Thomas Lopp and Harrison Thornton (Stewart 1908, 376; H. R. Thornton 1931, xiii). By mid-July of that year, the two men arrived in Wales, with a ready-framed house that was put up in a hurry by carpenters from the ship. By mid-August, they started school, regardless of the villager’s needs to spend valuable time harvesting and storing foods for the winter (Ray 1975, 215–16). The intersection of their cultures certainly had tensions. Kingikmiut had a hard time understanding the two foreign men who, in their view, weren’t acting as men, who should be out hunting, fishing, and trading, but who rather acted more as women in the village, by staying near home all day (Urvina and Urvina 2016, 93). By the end of their first year in residence, though, the teachers had over one hundred students regularly attending the school, who by that time, had mastered the alphabet and several hundred English words (Lopp 1892, 388).

In addition to his mission of education, Jackson was interested in changing the economic system of Inupiat, as part of his idea of “civilizing” Indigenous peoples, by bringing them “up” from a hunter-gatherer society to become capitalist entrepreneurs (Willis 2006, 277). Since the mid-nineteenth century coastal Inupiat had been deprived of much of their usual marine mammal stock because of overhunting by the American whaling industry, which also hunted walrus for their ivory tusks (Naske and Slotnick 1979, 195). Jackson became inspired by an idea suggested by Captain
Michael Healy of the U.S. Revenue Cutter Service to introduce the domestication of reindeer, as he had witnessed Indigenous peoples on the Chukotka Peninsula employing as the basis for their livelihood (Naske and Slotnick 1979, 67). Eventually, Jackson’s project in social engineering and economic development brought outsiders to Alaska from Chukotka and from as far away as Norway, including Chukchi and Sámi reindeer herders and their livestock. This sudden influx of foreign people, animals, and ideas brought change to the region seemingly overnight, and often unrequested by Alaska Natives.

Regardless of whether Alaska Natives were in agreement with the new forms of education and economy, they took root due to Jackson’s influence. Jackson’s annual reports, a requirement in fulfillment of federal grant monies awarded for the development of the reindeer project, included his own explanations and observations as well as input from administrators, supporters, and others involved in the project. Mr. Miner W. Bruce was superintendent of the reindeer station in Port Clarence, and after a year in residence, included his impressions of Alaska and Alaska Native cultures in the 1894 annual report. His description of Inupiaq dance and drumming starts with encouraging enthusiasm, but quickly becomes disparaging:

The principal amusement of the Eskimo is dancing, and they indulge in it upon the slightest provocation. While the women take part in this pastime, it is with moderation, and as a sort of embellishment to the fatiguing and wearisome jumping about so ceaselessly practiced by the men. They seem to find the most enjoyment in blending their voices with those of the men in song. Although they do not possess the accomplishment to a very great extent, nor is the number of tunes very large, yet there is a harmony in them all that becomes the more pleasing to the ear the oftener they are heard.
When dancing, one or more of the men beat upon a drum formed by stretching a piece of walrus entrail over a hoop, and this serves as a time-marker for the participants in the dance, to which the grotesque throwing about of the arms and twisting of their bodies are made to add a pantomimic accompaniment. During this time they jump and whirl about in the most violent manner, and only stop from sheer exhaustion.

This amusement often assumes the proportion of a festival lasting several days, and whole villages often go long distances to visit those of another. On such occasions the men bedeck themselves in all sorts of grotesque costumes, wearing upon their heads feathers of birds, their faces concealed behind hideous-looking wooden masks, and their bodies bare to the waist. (Bruce 1894, 114)

With careful reading, one can pick through Bruce’s description of Inupiaq dance to find gems, such as the description of the drum created with the traditional walrus stomach lining, the use of wooden dance masks, or the description of dance festivals that confirms oral history of epic ceremonial performances that went on for days. But Bruce’s description included derogatory words that give the impression that he did not appreciate the value of Inupiaq dance or the people who performed it. Words such as “fatiguing and wearisome” draw attention to Bruce’s dissatisfaction with the repetitive features of Inupiaq songs. The adjectival words “grotesque” and “hideous-looking” indicate his negative judgment of the visual elements of dance motions and regalia. Bruce’s overall tone indicates to his intended audience of supporters and donors to the reindeer project his disapproval of Inupiaq dance, while simultaneously educating his readers in the persistence of prejudice, by putting down Native ways of knowing in his introductory remarks. While his essay was not intended for Alaska Native audiences, its influence on American understanding of Inupiaq cultures as exotic othering had commenced.
As the first non-Native people living full-time in Wales, Thornton and Lopp spent their first year in residence as volunteer observers for the U.S. Weather Bureau, and wrote reports about their impressions of climate and environment, Alaska Natives and their customs, and their own progress at teaching at the new school. Thornton wrote a memoir, *Among the Eskimos of Wales, Alaska 1890-93*, that was edited, annotated, and published decades after his death by his wife, Neda S. Thornton and his brother, William M. Thornton (1931). Thornton’s personal account includes descriptions of music and dance activities in Wales, which provides a view of the mindset of American missionary teachers in the late nineteenth century. Thornton devotes a chapter of his memoir to “Musical Talent,” describing his perceptions of Inupiat affinity for music. He begins with a positive impression, quickly followed with a sense of dismay that their musical aesthetical values differ from his own:

> These Eskimos are fond of music, and they have a quick and correct ear. But at first they seemed to have no sense of harmony among several parts (bass, tenor, etc.), as civilized people understand it. When they heard any one singing bass, for example, they evidently thought that the poor fellow was unfortunate in some way and could not help himself. As we have intimated, the trouble obviously was that thitherto they had been taught practically nothing of harmony. (H. R. Thornton 1931, 77)

Thornton’s perspective indicates a leaning toward an idea that monophonic music was somehow less developed than polyphonic music of Euro-American styles, and that someday, with education, they might achieve the skills appropriate for “civilized” society. Of course he does not take into consideration sophisticated rhythmical elements inherent in Inupiaq music, which is highly stylized and can be difficult to notate using Western musical notation. Thornton’s disparaging remarks indicate his
frustration with their lack of American-style musical education, but reluctantly
concedes with a comment that shows his understanding of their appreciation of his
musical culture: “In the course of time, however, they learned to do more than pity
the singers and endure our music; they actually acquired a liking for it” (H. R.
Thornton 1931, 77).

After describing his efforts to introduce hymns and patriotic songs to the
community of Wales, Thornton offers his own impressions of Inupiaq music. “Their
own songs are very strange, weird and striking” (H. R. Thornton 1931, 78). While his
statement here indicates his disagreement with Inupiaq aesthetics for singing, it is
difficult to determine exactly what disturbed him. Perhaps Thornton’s account shows
his penchant toward his own culture’s musical styles. Consider the context from
which Thornton came, where cultivated church or classical music might have played
a central role, and vernacular or popular music of the day included the patriotic
marches of John Philip Sousa and the up-and-coming syncopated ragtime of Scott
Joplin (Hitchcock 1988). These American musical composers’ works often present in
major or minor keys, and have strong associations with steady 2/4 or 4/4 beat
patterns. Inupiaq songs do not always follow such regular meters, but are more often
presented in stylized 5/8 groupings, with sudden changes in tempo or stops in patterns
that punctuate or emphasize song texts. As monophonic music, Inupiaq songs do not
always fit into a major or minor modality, but follow a totally different aesthetic
sense. With songs often ending on scale degree 2, they do not give a listener with a
contemporaneous Euro-American ear a sense of finality of ending on the tonic scale
degree. Thornton’s statement adds to the general disposition of dislike of Inupiaq performing arts by demonstrating his sense of understanding and authority from the field.

During the second season of the school in Wales, Thornton left Alaska to seek more funding, give lectures about Alaska, and take courses in medicine and dentistry. He also met and married Neda Pratt, who agreed to travel to Wales with Thornton the following year and become a teacher in the school. They travelled with a second new teacher, Miss Ellen Kittredge, who married Thomas Lopp within months after her arrival in Wales. The two couples lived and worked together, until midsummer of 1893, when the Lopps moved to Port Clarence so that Mr. Lopp could administrate the new reindeer project. Soon, Thornton was shot and killed by a whaling gun set up by young men from the community. Ms. Lopp attested via letters home to her family that Thornton was a difficult person to get along with (Lopp Smith and Smith 2001, 23; Fair 2003, 361), while others reported that Thornton constantly carried his revolver, which came across as a threat to Kingikmiut (Johnshoy and Brevig 1944, 45). Perhaps his negative attitude led to tensions between Thornton and villagers and his unfortunate demise, as Ray suggests (Ray 1975, 219), while scholar Roxanne Willis suggests his enthusiasm for the new economics of the reindeer project provided partial friction (Willis 2006, 277). Subsequently the Lopps spent over a decade in Alaska, much of the time spent in Wales. They were well liked by the community, and over the years they raised a family and invited various relatives to join the
community as teachers and administrators for the reindeer project before moving to Seattle in 1902 (Lopp Smith and Smith 2001, 357).

In the fall of 1901 Ms. Suzanne Rognon Bernardi joined the Lopps in Wales to assist and take on the post of teacher before the Lopp’s departure. She stayed in Wales for several months through the winter before heading off to Nome, where the gold rush was in full swing and the city life it offered apparently held more interest for the former journalist and socialite. Anthropologist and folklorist Susan Fair traced Bernardi’s travels in Alaska and concludes that Bernardi had intended her position as a teacher to be a springboard to meet people in Alaska in order to be a writer, amateur ethnologist, and collector of artifacts to sell to the University of Pennsylvania museum (Fair 2003, 366). Bernardi’s early photographs and lengthy news article provide windows into attitudes toward Inupiaq cultural heritage from a different era.

In 1912 Bernardi wrote an extensive article for the Louisville Courier, with the headline that reads “Whaling with the Eskimos of Cape Prince of Wales: Woman Teacher of Local Nativity Writes of the Sport of the Sea and Attendant Wierd [sic] Customs Among the Aborigines of Alaska.” The headline suggests that Inupiaq customs were considered an oddity, perhaps to lure the readers of Kentucky, but nonetheless separating Inuit from American cultures and setting a tone of Euro-American superiority. This article details the ritual preparations for the spring whaling hunt and her impressions of a dance festival during the previous fall season. Toward the beginning of the article Bernardi notes that Inupiaq customs had already changed due to the influence of missionaries: “Because the missionaries had taught
them that their observance of ceremonial rites to propitiate the evil spirits was wrong, it was very hard for me to get a complete story of their whale ceremonies” (Bernardi 1912, 1). In just over ten years of the presence of the missionary school, the people of Wales had already adapted to the ways of the outsiders, or at least presented themselves that way to the new teacher in town. The erosion and erasure of cultural heritage had begun, proven here by Bernardi’s observations.

Ernest William Hawkes was a teacher based in St. Michael from 1911 to 1912 and on the Diomede Islands from 1912 to 1914. He produced some of the earliest ethnographic works entirely devoted to the musical and cultural activities in the Bering Strait region, including *The “Inviting-In” Feast of the Alaskan Eskimo* (1913) and *The Dance Festivals of the Alaskan Eskimo* (1914). By his writing, Hawkes seemed to be agreeable to supporting the idea that Alaska Native cultural events should be carried out as usual. But Hawkes witnessed the distress of the Natives that arose when pressure to stop their ceremonies was demanded by a young missionary teacher:

But my anxiety to witness the feast nearly came to grief owing to the over-zealous action of the young missionary in nominal charge of the Unalaklit. He scented some pagan performance in the local preparations, and promptly appealed to the military commander of the district to put a stop to the whole thing. Consequently, it was a very sober delegation of Eskimo that waited on me the next day—including the headmen and the shaman who had been hired to make the masks and direct the dances—to ask my assistance. They said that if they were forbidden to celebrate the feast on the island they would take to the mountains of the interior and perform their rites where they could not be molested. But if I said they could dance, they would go on with

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10 The current spelling for the name of the village is “Unalakleet.”
their preparations. They also asked me to use my influence with the military commander. To this I readily consented. (Hawkes 1913, 2–3)

The young missionary teacher made his concerns about the practice of musical customs known to the military, which from today’s perspective may seem overly excessive. Hawkes was interested in knowing and understanding the cultural and spiritual aspects of the ceremony, and made his wish known to the captain of the military unit. “I found the captain a very liberal man, not at all disposed to interfere with a peaceful native celebration, which had lost most of its religious significance, and which was still maintained mainly for its social significance, and as offering an opportunity for trade between two friendly tribes” (Hawkes 1913, 3). Here Hawkes indicates that the Inuit had already adapted their music and dance to reflect social values rather than non-Christian (“pagan,” in his words) spiritual values. It is possible that this adaptation of ceremony to a social activity began as an act of resistance, as a way to evade and survive cultural persecution, by finding soft spots in governmental assimilationist policies in order to continue practicing their arts. Historian John Troutman suggests Lakota carried out similar acts of musical resistance by the adaptation of the traditional ceremonial calendar to fit in with American holidays, as a way of side-stepping regulations imposed by government officials (Troutman 2009, 32).

Subsequent to his years spent in Alaska, Hawkes spent time on the Labrador Peninsula of Canada in 1914 as an agent for the Geological Survey of Canada. In his associated report The Labrador Eskimo (1916), Hawkes includes a section devoted to music. After he mentions different types of Inuit singing found on the Labrador
Peninsula, including drum-dancing and women’s cradle songs, he makes reference to the musical tradition of throat singing, and compared it to a similar type of singing he had heard in Alaska in the years previous. “Among the Alaskan Eskimo the young girls have a curious type of song which they perform among themselves as a sort of game or amusement. It is called ‘throat-singing’ and consists of a series of guttural ejaculations, which they attribute to the Raven” (Hawkes 1916, 123). Inuit of Canada are famous for their katajjait (throat singing) (Beaudry 1978; Charron 1978; Nattiez 1983; Piercey 2008; Piercey-Lewis 2015), and it has been known to be practiced among Chukchi and Taymyr of Russia (Ammann 1993, 1994; Ojamaa 2005), and among Ainu of Japan (Nattiez 1999). In Alaska in the present era, it is an unknown art form (T. F. Johnston 1976b, 144). In conversation with the author in 2015, Willie Topkok, an elder of the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage, spoke about how they used to do throat singing on the Seward Peninsula a long time ago, but the practice was lost for unknown reasons (W. Topkok 2015). The corroboration between Hawkes and Topkok suggests Inupiat of Alaska suffered a cultural loss of the art of throat singing in Alaska.

Whether Alaska Natives will reconstruct the practice of some form of throat singing remains to be seen; it is not impossible to awaken a tradition that has been in disuse for a time. Shirley Hauck’s dissertation, “Extinction and Reconstruction of Aleut Music and Dance” claims that “Aboriginal Aleut music and dance are extinct” (1986, 1). In the 1990s Ethan Petticrew founded the Atka Dancers, an Unanga˚ (Aleut) cultural heritage group on the island of Atka, and continues to lead a second
group in Anchorage at the present time. In October 2015, Petticrew led a performance of the Atka Dancers at the annual Alaska Federation of Natives convention *Quyana Nights* dance festival. He claimed to the audience that the dances had been “asleep” for an extended period of time, but now they are creating new songs and dances based on research and with help from cultural knowledge specialists from Alaska and Russia. As MaryGen Salmon says in her article regarding a performance by the Unangañ dance group, “Perhaps Atkan culture ‘went to sleep’ after World War II, but it was far from ‘extinct’” (Salmon 2003, 26). Enterprising culture bearers such as the Atka Dancers provide inspiration for Inupiat to vitalize a musical form that may be asleep, but currently the loss of the practice of throat singing is still evident.

While Hawkes had been encouraging Inupiat to continue to practice their ritual dance festivals in the early twentieth century, other administrators were not as willing to give support for Indigenous performing arts. The magazine *The Eskimo* was published intermittently in Nome, monthly and at times quarterly from 1916 to 1918 and from 1936 to 1947 by the “superintendent of the N.W. District in the interest and work of the U.S. Bureau of Education among the Eskimos of Northern Alaska,” with Dyfed Evans acting as editor in 1917. An article titled “Kosga House Dancing” (Evans 1917), attributed to an author with the pseudonym “Ookpik,”11 was most likely written with the author posing as a Native writer to provide “insider” influence to Inupiaq communities to stop dancing in the *qazgit* (community meeting

11 The Inupiaq word *ukpik* means “snowy owl,” and the root word *ukpiq-* means “to believe” (MacLean 2014, 371).
houses). First, the author downgrades dancing and time spent in the *qazgi*, calling it a waste of time, and even childish:

In the kosgas at Cape Prince of Wales and Diomede Islands countless valuable hours are wasted in drumming and howling just as the Ipanee\(^\text{12}\) people did hundreds of years ago when almost every people on the world were wild. That is a poor sign of advancement for Wales and Diomede.

We would like to ask these dancing people if it pays? We think not, because it does not pay to waste anything, especially time, of which none of us have enough. The Diomede and Wales people are mostly very, very poor, just because the time that should be used for hunting food, for carving ivory, for making souvenirs and for sewing, is spent in the kosgas playing just like little children. (Evans 1917, 4)

This statement illuminates a clash of cultural values. That the author of the article stressed that making souvenirs was a more valuable way of spending one’s time reflects a bias towards capitalism, whereas the traditional economy that revolved around hunting included holistic and spiritual methods of developing relationships with animal spirits through the medium of music and dancing. The article’s negative attitudes toward dancing and drumming also proffers the idea that keeping old traditions alive will make them people of the past instead of assimilated American futurists. The author of this document tried to sway opinion with proof that the people of villages to the north had already demolished their community houses, to show that they were moving toward assimilation of American customs:

Long ago the Shismaref people decided that a dancing kosga was a bad thing for them and their children so they did a wise thing and used their kosga for firewood. There are no kosgas in the big land to the north and there the Eskimos are prosperous and happy. That great

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\(^{12}\)The Inupiaq word *aippaani* means “long ago in the distant past, in olden days; ‘in the other time’” (MacLean 2014, 16).
leader of Eskimos Elecktoona of Kivalina has been opposed to kosga dancing for years. He is a wise man and wealthy too. (Evans 1917, 4)

To me, reading this type of propaganda issued with the intent of destroying cultural heritage for the purpose of gaining the allegiance of Indigenous peoples indicates a blindness to the rich qualities of Inupiaq ways of being. As scholar Patrick Wolfe reminds readers in his article “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” “Settler colonialism destroys to replace” (P. Wolfe 2006, 388): in this case, the destruction of the qazgi was meant to encourage Indigenous peoples to accept American customs over their own.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, attitudes of administrators and educators toward Alaska Natives were certainly influenced by overarching American public opinions that were reflected in laws governing the Territory of Alaska. For instance, early laws regarding Alaska Native citizenship and voting rights were detrimental toward traditional cultural practices. In 1867 the Treaty of Cession was the vehicle of transmission for the Unites States purchase of Alaska from Russia. In that document, Alaska Natives were not considered as citizens of Alaska or the United States, but as “uncivilized tribes,” who were “subject to such laws and regulations as the United States may, from time to time, adopt in regard to aboriginal tribes of that country” (Case and Voluck 2012, 24). As a result of an absence of citizenship status, Alaska Natives were denied voting rights until 1915, when the Alaska Territorial Legislature passed an act (Alaska S.B. 21) to define the political status of Alaska Natives. At that time Alaska Natives were thus given the opportunity to apply for citizenship and the right to vote. The application process was rigorous,
however. In addition to making a formal application to the local government agents or the school board or teachers (as regionally available), the applicant had to be examined by the teachers or government agents as to their “total abandonment of any tribal customs or relationship, and the facts regarding the applicant’s adoption of the habits of a civilized life” (Landreth and Smith 2007, 90). In addition to being questioned by school or government agents, the applicant had to have “five white citizens of the United States” attest that he had abandoned tribal customs for at least one year (C. E. Davidson 1915, 53). I believe the law encouraged teachers and government agents of the early twentieth century to develop attitudes of disdain and possibly disruption toward traditional tribal customs, including cultural performing arts of dance and music. Certainly teachers and government agents in remote communities were informed of the requirements of the new law, and influenced by social codes expressed in the legal domain. Of course, one must keep in mind that multiple viewpoints toward historic laws abound. Retired University of Alaska professor of Alaska Native Studies Dennis Demmert stressed that even though the requirements of the 1915 law may look racist to us in this day and age, the Alaska Native Brotherhood, a Southeast Alaska Native organization formed to fight for the rights of Native peoples, endorsed the law at the time because they dearly wanted the right to vote (Haycox and McClanahan 2007, 71). To them, getting one step closer to being on equal footing with administrators on their own homelands was worth hiding tribal customs behind closed doors. This cumbersome territorial law was superseded by the federal Citizenship Act of 1924, which allowed all Indigenous peoples born in
the United States to become citizens with much less restrictive application processes, even though Alaska’s Territorial Legislature continued to pass restrictive voting laws related to English literacy (Landreth and Smith 2007, 90).

In addition to tolerating cultural pressures from state administrators and teachers, the influx of whalers and gold miners who came from other parts of the world brought epidemic diseases that gripped communities with fierce vengeances, taking many cultural experts to the grave. In 1900, a dual outbreak of measles and influenza in northwestern Alaska was called “The Great Sickness,” when villages lost twenty-five to fifty percent of their populations, resulting in the death of thousands due to illness (R. J. Wolfe 1982, 91). In 1918, the Spanish Influenza ran rampant worldwide (Crosby 2003). In his memoir about his work in Alaska, Dr. Henry W. Greist notes that between Christmas of 1917 and the first day of the New Year of 1918, hundreds of people in Wales, Tin City, and Teller died from Spanish Influenza (Greist 1961, Chapter III, page 1). My grandparents were both orphaned in Wales as children during that time, and taken in care by other families in the community (J. E. Senungetuk 1982, 12; Sven D. Haakanson, Jr. 2016, 27). In her essay regarding missionary influence in Alaska, Maria Williams points out that traditional healers of the time were powerless against new imported diseases. The missionary teachers and doctors brought medicine and skills to treat and to prevent illnesses, and thus took on new powers in communities (Maria Sháa Tláa Williams 2009, 160). In addition to medicines, they provided sustenance in the aftermath of epidemics, such as canned food products to make it through the winter. Reverend T. L. Brevig was famous for
his orphanage that served children left with no families, as well as widows and sick men (Johnshoy and Brevig 1944). Many elders who held specialized knowledge of cultural arts and oral histories often succumbed in a single epidemic, leaving younger adults to attend to survival without cultural leaders. Tremendous loss through multiple epidemics left communities without hunters to provide steady sustenance for years, let alone leaders to carry out dance festivals.

In addition to community members lost to epidemic diseases, educational policies and opportunities began to draw people away from their home communities, thus further disrupting processes of the transfer of traditional knowledge. Boarding or residential schools, such as the Carlisle Indian School first opened by Richard Pratt in 1879 in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, were intended for the cultural assimilation of Native Americans. The federal Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) followed this model and opened dozens of boarding schools that took children away from their families and stripped them of their ties to traditional ways and to cultural knowledge bearers (Gram 2013). In Alaska, just after World War II, the BIA adopted a dismantled military base just outside of Sitka, and on that site opened a boarding school for Alaska Native students in 1947 (Hirshberg 2009, 2). At the time, it was one of a few secondary schools open to rural Alaska Native students within the Territory of Alaska. Throughout my life, I have heard my father, Ron Senungetuk, tell his story about when, in 1948, he was recruited and left Wales to attend the boarding school at Mt. Edgecumbe for the ninth grade. At the time, the school in Wales was limited to grades one through eight, and Ron had impressed teachers enough to warrant
recommendation to the new school in Southeast Alaska. In the new school, Ron excelled in the art department under the tutelage of George Fedoroff, who encouraged him to pursue further studies at the college level. Eventually, after completing military service, a bachelor’s degree at the Rochester Institute of Technology, and graduate studies as a Fulbright Scholar in Oslo, Norway, Ron was hired to teach art at the University of Alaska in Fairbanks (Sven D. Haakanson, Jr. 2016, 27). While his early life in Wales influenced his work and artwork throughout his life, he never really returned to his home except for short visits. He told me that he feels he missed out on some aspects of Inupiaq culture, such as honing his hunting skills and sharpening his ability to speak the Wales dialect of the Inupiaq language. Ron’s story is not unique in Alaska, as many young Alaska Native people in the mid-twentieth century saw education as an opportunity to pursue a different type of lifestyle.

Education scholar Diane Hirshberg notes that Mt. Edgecumbe has a track record for providing high levels of quality education and graduating Alaska Native leaders (Hirshberg 2009, 4). In Ron’s case, his education opened doors that allowed him to lead a successful life developing the Native Art Center at the University of Alaska Fairbanks and curricula in Native Arts, directing the art department at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, and eventually creating works for public art projects for installation around the state and the nation. But the fact remains that boarding schools had a strong influence in changing the face of cultures in communities throughout Alaska by removing students from their homes and creating a disruption of the transfer of traditional knowledge in the mid-twentieth century.
In the mid-twentieth century, international politics began to have an effect on cultural affairs in the Bering Strait. For millennia, Inupiat had traveled across the Bering Strait for trading and dance festivals (D. M. Kingston 2000; R. K. Menadelook 2013). Crossing the narrow strip of often turbulent ocean between the two continents by umiat (whaling boats) had never presented insurmountable problems for people who depended on the sea for their livelihoods. Since the late 1930s, the United States and the Soviet Union of Socialist Republics created and began to enforce a formal agreement to allow a limited number of Indigenous peoples to cross the border freely to practice their traditional trading customs. But in 1948, the countries revoked that agreement (Krauss 1994, 369). This marked the end of cultural festivals involving visiting communities from across the Bering Strait for forty years. It was a loss for people on both sides of the border, as previously they maintained ties with relatives and friends through trade festivals with shared dance and music (D. M. Kingston 2000). Such a loss that came about due to hegemonic circumstances contributed to the discontinuation of transnational trading festivals, and eventual erosion of cultural practices.

Not all early twentieth-century observers of Inupiaq cultures were convinced that assimilation into American ways was the right thing to do. Clark M. Garber spent two years at the Cape Prince of Wales in the mid-1920s, followed by six years in Akiak, Alaska, serving as the local Superintendent of Eskimo Schools, Medical Relief, and Reindeer Herds. In his memoir, Stories and Legends of the Bering Strait
Garber recognizes that the cultures in these two communities were developed over long periods of time. He also acknowledges the detrimental effects of missionary influences and school administrators’ policies on their cultural lives in just fifty years. His comments indicate his dissatisfaction with their influences, and he laments the “complete destruction” by the replacement of Euro-American ideals. His assessment seems unusually sympathetic toward Alaska Native cultures within the context of so much literature that presses for Inupiat assimilation to Americanism.

In the mid-twentieth century, teachers continued to report about the demise of the practice of music and dance on the Seward Peninsula. In 1955, Wilford Corbin moved to Wales with his wife and young son to be a teacher in the school. Corbin wrote a short article published in 1956 in the airline magazine *Wien Alaska Arctic Liner*, titled “Wales Eskimo Dances Fade Away.” In this article Corbin focuses on the decline of traditional Inupiaq dancing in favor of Euro-American style dances.
introduced by a former teacher in the village. “Just recently the last Eskimo drum was sold to a tourist. A few of the old timers tried long to uphold the dance of their fathers. But growing interest of the younger generation in the ball room and square dancing has led to the changing custom in the village” (W. W. Corbin 1956, 2). The article title and content paint an image of changing tastes in entertainment visible to him while in residence in the community. The article, written by a person who had experience in the community and held a position of authority, and presented in a magazine aimed at airline passengers and customers, may have reflected as well as continued to influence widespread beliefs about American hegemony.

However, in his memoir, *A World Apart*, published decades later, Corbin devotes a chapter to describing winter dance sessions held at the school on Saturday evenings while he was a teacher in Wales (W. Corbin 2000, 85–91). He recounts how Toby Anungazuk (Sr.) made a request to hold weekly dance sessions at the school during the winter months, citing that the elders and families expressed a need to gather to socialize and exercise. This conversation convinced the teacher to allow community dances and holiday celebrations in the school building. Corbin describes traditional walrus-stomach lining drums used by Peter Ibianna and four other men who sang together while others danced in the schoolroom. Corbin notes how people danced late into the night, seemingly with a healthy amount of enthusiasm. “The spirited drumming and lively, creative dancing lasted until late at night and was an appropriate ending to each week in the darkness of the long winter months” (W. Corbin 2000, 88). It is difficult to pinpoint why Corbin published an article in the
mid-1950s that nearly condoned the demise of dance practice, while decades later he promoted the idea that dancing had been a strong traditional activity during his residency. Perhaps his writing reflects attitudes of the times, which have adapted more positive tones in recent decades, promoting healthier attitudes towards Native cultural activities.

First-hand Indigenous accounts acknowledge the depths of cultural losses and provide insight into circumstances in decades past. Elizabeth Bernhardt Pinson (1912-2006) was a granddaughter of Ootenna and Kinaviak, and the daughter of Ouiyaghasiak, who was born in 1889 in Shishmaref and raised in Wales. Ouiyaghasiak married a German-American named Albert Bernhardt, a whaler, gold prospector, and homesteader who settled near Teller. Pinson’s memoir, *Alaska’s Daughter* (2004), surveys a period of great changes in the Arctic, from her experiences of surviving the 1918 influenza epidemic to attending a Bureau of Indian Affairs boarding school to moving to Washington State and to California, to witnessing new modes of transportation and communications, and the growth of new cities in Alaska. Regarding traditional Inupiaq cultural activities, Pinson writes in her memoir:

> Few of the Alaska Natives who now inhabit the North remember much about the early life of their parents let alone their grandparents. In the past and during my early years there was little interest in the old traditions of the parents or grandparents, especially in the villages where there was considerable western or Anglo influence. The older ones seemed to feel that the younger ones couldn’t care less about their heritage, be it customs or culture, and the younger generation had a lackadaisical attitude about what life was like a generation or two ago. (Pinson 2004, 35)
Pinson’s comments reveal a considerable generational gap at a time of great changes in the region, with the young people finding interest in newly introduced sources of education, entertainment, and income. Pinson’s perspective certainly may have been focused by her experiences in local missionary and boarding schools, where the aim was to alienate Alaska Native children from family life and culture and create a working class ready to assist American industrialists (see Hensley 2009, 205).

In his memoir about growing up in Wales and later in Nome, *Give or Take a Century* (1982), Joe Senungetuk (the author’s uncle) summarizes the decline of the practice of traditional music and dance due to a quick succession of social pressures. “Now, with the young moving to other areas, the disruption of family life, and western influence, the original Eskimo dance has not survived well” (J. E. Senungetuk 1982, 81). Joe’s comment and memoir reflects his own experience as a young boy, when in the 1950s the Senungetuk family moved from Wales to Nome, a gold rush town that offered employment, education, and other services, but not much by way of traditional Inupiaq dance practices at the time. Joe’s chronicle calls attention to his experiences as a young man with the prevalence of American assimilationist activities in Nome, such as basketball, newspaper routes, Civil Air Patrol service and Boy Scouts, whilst learning from prejudiced school books that provided misinformation about Inuit. In a way, Joe’s experience has parallels to my own, in that I grew up in Fairbanks, a town separate from my family’s traditional community, and thus, I had little opportunity to practice Inupiaq language and culture as a young person. The two of us have witnessed the loss of community and culture
through the family’s search for a better way of life, spread through two generations and two branches of the family tree. Indeed, variations on our stories have been repeated throughout our family, community, and throughout Alaska, and have had deleterious effects on cultural knowledge of generations of Alaska Natives.

Sophie Nothstine, elder of the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage, also spoke of the loss of dancing in Wales in the late 1940s in an article presented in the *Kaŋįqsirugut News*, a newsletter of the Norton Sound Health Corporation:

Sophie Tungwenuk Nothstine was 7 when men from a church in Nome visited her Wales church and told them dancing was evil—all dancing, including their Native dances. “I knew in my heart when I was a little girl that it was not evil,” Nothstine remembers. Yet adults in the community listened to what they had been told. And so, around 1947, the drums went silent. Wales, once known for its graceful dancers and strong drummers, no longer danced. (Norton Sound Health Corporation 2002, 1)

Sophie’s account points to a specific date when the practice of dancing stopped in Wales, a date she associates with a time when she was a young girl. This date circumstantiates with Wilford Corbin’s short article mentioned above, which states that the last drum had been sold to a tourist in the mid-1950s (W. W. Corbin 1956).

Kingikmiut elder and anthropologist Herbert Anungazuk sums up the effects of a century’s worth of outsiders’ views on Native culture. In 2003, he writes:

Some of the truly good parts of indigenous life are viewed with disdain by the newcomers, and the rituals and ceremonies that are involved in fulfilling a complex culture, and not recognized and respected, has caused a breakdown of the innermost being of our culture. It is sad that those who wish to regain the special rituals that must be done before hunting do not have the support of the people who fear the tone of resentment and jealousies of those with other beliefs. (H. O. Anungazuk 2003, 428)
Anungazuk recognizes the current tension between people who want to rebuild rituals and people who side with newly introduced belief systems. However, Anungazuk shows hope for the future through developing relationships with elders and with researchers associated with universities and museums.

The rituals that are practiced to show respect to harvest continued to lie dormant for generations, but our relationship with universities and museums, and the return of ancestral heirlooms is assisting us in retrieving some of the ways of acknowledging the spirit of the whale, or other mammals. The sharing of this special knowledge is forthcoming from the elders, as many are coming forward to assist in unraveling many questions that exist between man and the animal kingdom. (H. O. Anungazuk 2003, 429)

Anungazuk’s hope for the future in learning from the elders must be heeded quickly, as he passed away in 2010 (Jolles 2012). And while knowledgeable Kingikmiut elders, such as Faye Ongtowasruk, had been recently participating with scholars on presenting and documenting traditional knowledge (Lincoln et al. 2010), she and other culture bearers have passed away recently, such as Clyde Ongtowasruk Sr. (Raymond-Yakoubian and Raymond-Yakoubian 2015).

This initial tabulation of primary sources documents a century of oppressive attitudes and policies directed at Inupiaq cultural arts, especially music and dance, and appear as propaganda lauding the degradation of Indigenous cultures. The cumulative effects wore down efforts to continue the practice of traditional music and dance in Wales, as in many communities throughout Alaska. If wellness is knowing who we are, knowing these histories that surround the degradation of cultural practices must also be part of wellness. It helps to satisfy the question of how did we
end up here, with so much loss to our music and dance knowledge. More important, however, is the growth of healing practices of music and dance in recent decades, which is discussed in the next section.

1.3 Healing

Native American historical trauma based in cultural oppression has been a topic of study in recent years (Wexler 2006; Jervis et al. 2006; Begay, Jr. 2012; Goodkind et al. 2012; Wexler 2014). Authors regarding this topic often credit the idea to the work of Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart, who derived her idea from studies of children of Jewish Holocaust survivors, and applied the concept to Lakota, who experienced genocidal policies set by American government (Brave Heart 1998, 288–89). Historical trauma refers to the unresolved issues of negative effects of traumas experienced by elders of previous generations, including but not limited to devastating losses experienced through epidemic illnesses, loss of children through boarding school attendance, the loss of language, lifestyle and culture through cultural oppression forced by local schools and religious institutions, forced relocations, and institutionalized racism, all of which have been experienced by Inupiat in northwest Alaska (J. E. Senungetuk 1982; Pinson 2004; Urvina and Urvina 2016; D. Kingston and Marino 2010). In subsequent generations, historical trauma manifests itself in the social ills of high rates of domestic violence, alcohol and drug abuse, suicide, homicide, accidental deaths, poverty, sexual assault, and other social problems (Brave Heart 1998, 289–90; Brave Heart and DeBruyn 1998). In studies
regarding behavioral health services based in northwest Alaska, community health education specialist Lisa Wexler reports that people attribute social ills such as substance abuse and suicide to loss of control over culture, language, and subsistence lifestyle (Wexler 2006), and that regaining control over those issues might offer more solutions than ineffective Euro-American style behavioral health services (Wexler 2011).

Greg Tungwenuk Nothstine credits the creation of the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage to the idea of claiming a healthy lifestyle for Inupiat living in Anchorage. As a young man, Nothstine was an athlete who participated in the World Eskimo-Indian Olympics (WEIO) festival held in Fairbanks (Kelley and Lund 1986, 48). As a result of becoming well-known in the WEIO community as a medalist, Greg had been asked to serve as the youth representative on a committee of the Alaska Federation of Natives that promoted alcohol and drug-free lifestyles in Native communities. One of the goals of the committee was to model and encourage Native values and activities, so Greg set out to find a way to become personally involved in a cultural dance group. Greg received encouragement from Ugiuvangmiut King Island elder Paul Tiulana, who had a King Island-style Inupiaq dance group in Anchorage at the time, to reach out to Kingikmiut elders who might remember the dance and music from times past. In 1990, Greg, with his mother Sophie Nothstine and cousin Richard Atuk, went to Wales and asked elders what they remembered about songs and dances. They recorded songs and brought them back to Anchorage, where they started weekly practice sessions to learn and claim them (H. A.
Senungetuk 2012, 68–71). After a quarter of a century of regular practice sessions and performances, the board of directors of the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage re-affirmed their commitment to promoting a drug and alcohol-free environment at all gatherings by adopting a policy in their by-laws (field notes, February 10, 2016). They recently gave their support to a group called “Sobermiut,” a local Anchorage-based non-profit organized to promote and provide support for a healthy lifestyle, in asking the State of Alaska to reinstate the designation of the month of March as “Sober-Awareness Month” (field notes, Sept. 29, 2016). The group maintains their commitment to promoting a healthy way of life through cultural performance.

The Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage’s stance on promoting healthy living is based in the lifestyle of Kingikmiut of generations past. Michael Kazingnuk (introduced above in section 2.1 Aipanitaq inâlliq: Old Stories) gives details about the health and strength of Inupiat of the Seward Peninsula in his manuscript of the early twentieth century. In a passage describing the activities of the qazgi, Kazingnuk remarks on the health of Inupiat at the time: “Many days they have long dance. I don’t see no starvation or sickness or many kind disease. I can’t hardly see sick Eskimos. I only see all healthy strong minded, strong bodied, even oldest people has good health” (Kazingnuk 1937, 142–43). Kazingnuk does not directly attribute the state of health directly to dancing and singing, but the placement of his statement directly amidst discussion about dance shows his association. His first-hand account of healthy people in his time is reassuring, especially in light of so many
influences that had negative affects on culture and health in general at the time, such as multiple epidemic diseases (see previous section, 1.2 American Influences).

For the present generation of Alaska Native peoples, recognizing cultural oppression that the elders faced, often when they were young children, is an important part of facing historical trauma that is ongoing in today’s generation (Macdougall 2015). From reading through the oppressive literature presented in the previous section (1.2 American Influences) that were meant to encourage the processes of assimilating Alaska Native peoples into greater American societal standards of living, it is apparent that the ancestors put up with a lot of pressures to conform with American efforts of creating a sense of nationhood through education (Huhndorf 2009, Chapter 1, "Colonizing Alaska"). However, Alaska Native peoples weren’t without a sense of resistance. Cup’ik elder Joan Pirciralria Hamilton writes about how Alaska Native peoples hung on to their cultural practices, even when under pressure to make them cease:

> Despite the impact of outside contact in the last one hundred years that brought devastating loss of life due to epidemics, and more recent attempts by government policies, educators, and missionaries to ‘Westernize’ our way of living, the people held, dearly and often secretly, to their languages, festivals and ceremonies. This includes *yuraq* (Native dance). (Hamilton 2009, 254)

Today’s generation must recognize the strength that it took for elders to hold on to languages and dance and music, often in secret, as Hamilton suggests. Knowing what people did to make cultural performance possible today helps to understand the strong position we are in to continue to practice in solidarity at the present time.
Some people might have kept their knowledge secret from each other, as well. For the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage, the elders who regularly come to practice sometimes mention that their older siblings have not had as much courage to participate, even after watching the group grow in their practice for twenty-five years. Sophie Nothstine speaks about the shame of keeping the knowledge secret:

“The shame is still there because none of our Eskimo people spoke up to continue their dances,” said Sophie Nothstine, who did not start dancing herself until age 50. “What you have to do when you first start is really experience the trauma so you can get well, so you can get healed,” Nothstine, a counselor for Norton Sound Health Corporation, said. (Norton Sound Health Corporation 2002, 17)

Sophie Nothstine’s advice speaks to the heart of why people might still carry conflicted feelings about dancing in the current generation: because no one spoke up at the time of cultural oppression, even when it happened generations ago. That shame has been passed from generation to generation. Having the courage to take ownership of it in the present allows for the healing of historical trauma. That Sophie took courage in her mid-life to help bring the dance practice to life and that she continues to lead the dance group a quarter of a century later shows her determination and strength to sustain Kingikmiut culture.

One part of the healthy mindset of the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage is creating a stable practice environment. The group holds practice sessions on Monday evenings, regardless of holidays, unless the Cook Inlet Tribal Council (CITC) building manager or security manager is away on holiday and not available to let the group into the building. Knowing that the group is practicing, rain
or shine, summer or winter, with a few people in attendance or many, there are no decisions to make about dancing in season. Individual participants may choose to do other activities, such as go fishing during the summer, or go to college or graduate school during the winter, or take personal time off from the group in general for a few weeks. Knowing that there is a group to go back to is important, not only for people who live in Anchorage and practice regularly, but also for Kingikmiut and other interested participants who live in Wales or Nome or some other location who drop in to practice sessions when they are in town for other business. Like a family that they can go to without question, the group accepts participants back into the fold whenever they are ready and willing to practice.

In addition to the holistic approaches and attitudes presented by Kingikmiut regarding the benefits of practicing music and dance on a regular basis, scientists, musicologists, and others have confirmed the health benefits of group singing for multiple reasons. Stephen Clift and his colleagues surveyed over a thousand singers in multiple countries, asking them about their perceptions of the benefits of singing in groups. Many people reported that singing helps keep them fit, active, and healthy overall, and gave specific credit to controlled breathing and concentration necessary to sing in a group, adding relaxation and stress relief as an added benefit (Clift et al. 2009). Gunter Kreutz and his colleagues studied singers in amateur choirs, and found positive increases in mean levels of secretory immunoglobulin A (sIgA), which plays an important role in defending infections found in the upper respiratory system. In addition, they found positive changes in emotional states through participation in
singing, as compared to listening to music (Kreutz et al. 2003). Mary Gick and Jennifer Nicol corroborate the benefits of singing for respiratory conditions, with a study specifically focused on the affects of singing on chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and asthma (Gick and Nicol 2015). Other studies show benefits of group singing for a variety of conditions such as eating disorders (Pavlakou 2009), Alzheimer’s disease and dementia (J. W. Davidson and Fedele 2011), neurological disorders (Wan et al. 2010), and recovery from stroke (Tamplin et al. 2013). Certainly scientific studies confirm what Indigenous knowledge had already long established: that group singing and dancing is good for people.

From times before the implementation of American-style education, including introduced forms of religious ideology, economics, and language, first hand accounts regarding Inupiaq music and dance reveal a tiny window into a world that seems far removed in time, if not space. Similarly, primary documents stemming from the new settler-colonial society that cite negative attitudes regarding Inupiaq performative arts show the pressures Indigenous peoples tolerated for over a century. The fact that Kingikmiut (and other Alaska Native groups) have been taking measures to heal from the effects of historical trauma using music and dance as a focal point shows the importance of the art form in the lives of the people in the present.
This chapter presents the idea of the home qazgi\textsuperscript{13} as a place of learning, a place for practicing music and dance, and creating community. The Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage practice regularly in a space in central Anchorage, in the lobby or conference space of an office building belonging to a local tribal council. I suggest that the activities of the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage in the twenty-first century reflect the traditional activities of the qazgi from generations past. While the building may have changed from the log, bone, and sod houses of previous eras, aspects of traditional activities have been vitalized, and the activities of the group reflect facets of Kingikmiut ideas of community, ways of knowing and teaching, creating, identity, language, and ownership through the practice of songs and dances. Rather than blending their performative culture into a pan-Inupiaq homogeneous dance style, Kingikmiut continue to express culture as conceived by Kingikmiut in Anchorage.

First, I introduce the reader to the regular practice sessions of the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage in the home qazgi in the city. The idea of the “community” in “community house” bears discussion, leading to a consideration of the idea of Kingikmiut in diaspora, and the suggestion of new ways of thinking about Kingikmiut in the city, such as ideas of cosmobility, deterritorialization, urbanization, and “Native hubs.” The sounds of the practice sessions, including the soundscape as a whole, as well as the sounds of singing and the sounds of drumming, beget an Inupiaq acoustemology of egalitarian inclusivity. The improvisational invitational dances can be seen as important expressions of commitment to the group, and the choreographed motion dances can be vehicles of song meaning and repositories of oral histories. The home qazgi is a place for learning and creating, a place where Kingikmiut teach old songs and compose new songs in ways that relate to the ancestors, and simultaneously look forward toward the future by adapting new methods of composition and teaching younger generations of Kingikmiut.

2.1 CITC in the City: Monday Night Practices

The Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage meet every Monday night to practice singing and dancing together. In recent years the Kingikmiut Dancers have been holding their practice sessions in the office building of the Cook Inlet Tribal Council (CITC) in mid-town Anchorage. The CITC is a tribal non-profit organization that serves Anchorage-area Alaska Native and American Indian residents in areas of housing, employment, educational, medical, and social needs.
building is a modern, architect-designed structure that reflects elements of nature in its styling. The irregularly spaced windows and outdoor tile are meant to echo the random patterning of birch bark on the exterior of the building. The ground floor entry has lobby space tiled in natural stone hues, and it is filled with chairs made with birch wood. The walls are colored with nature tones, and decorated with archival images depicting Alaska Native dignitaries and celebrities, and a mural featuring a timeline of dates important to Alaska Native history. A coffee kiosk, called “Coho Cup,” occupies one corner of the main lobby space, but is usually closed in the evenings when the Kingikmiut dance group meets to practice in the lobby or in one of the conference-style meeting rooms in the adjoining hall. The security guard on duty lets people in through the locked doors, as they meet after normal business hours.

Most Monday evenings, aside from building closures for official holidays, the Kingikmiut Dancers start arriving at the CITC office building at around six o’clock in the evening. There is a family with an elder great-grandmother in a wheelchair, two middle-aged men, and a young woman with a baby. There are the five college-aged sisters and their brother who has recently finished basic training in the Marines, and his girlfriend who has a brand new baby. There is a young single father with a daughter and young son, all who have moved to the city in recent years. There is the working mother of three children who volunteers her time to work with Inupiaq language revitalization classes every week and insists her children attend practices, even if they are not ready to try dancing this year or the next. There are the elder ladies who are all related as sisters or cousins, some of them learning to dance for the
first time. There are the original founders of the group, those who have led the group and kept practices and performances going for twenty-five years. Since the members generally have family ties to the village of Kingigin, many are related in some way.

The drum leader brings a canvas sack with about eight to ten drums and a bag full of slender, flexible drumsticks. The men set up chairs in a single row on one side of the room. They set out two or three pairs of gloves on the floor in front of them—some gloves are hand-knit by an elder in the group, made with two colors of yarn with a snowflake pattern on the outside, while other gloves might be utility gloves, as for gardening or a workshop. The men also set out bottles of water used to spray their drumheads, just enough to create a specific tension that affects the sound quality and reaction of the drum. The communal aspect of the tools for music making is evident as the men help themselves to the drums and drum sticks. Each drummer might gravitate to his favorite drum and stick, and some bring their own personal sets, and usually there are extras in case visitors join the session.

The women set out a row of chairs on the opposite wall, facing the men. The elder women often sit together, sometimes speaking in their Kingikmiut dialect of the Inupiaq language. The younger women and girls talk together, often looking after children, who might meander around the space as they get comfortable with adult members. Some women wear uġilhaat, traditional dresses or shirts made with cotton cloth, usually with a large front pocket and a hood, styled with references to ancient Inupiaq parkas. In general, the atmosphere is casual, and people come and go as they wish to answer cell phone calls or to take a breath of fresh air or have a cigarette.
At around half past six, the lead drummer will start tapping his drum, lightly at first, but rhythmically. Sometimes he will adjust his drum with more water, first spraying or dripping it from a water bottle, then spreading it around with his palm. Then he starts singing, *a capella*, usually intoning one or two pitches to indicate a key. He begins the song without telling anyone which song it is, but usually it is one of the most well known “invitational” songs, meant as a warm-up for singers and dancers. After the first few notes, other singers and drummers recognize the song and join in as they like, filling the room with sound. Some of the women get up and dance with improvisational dance motions, waving their hands one at a time, side to side, in front of their faces and out to the sides, and bending their knees to the steady beats of the drums. The singers repeat the song, this time with much more gusto, the dancers moving their bodies with more intensity. When it is over, the dancers return to their seats, some breathing hard, smiling.

The lead drummer starts another invitational song, another well-known song that everyone can join. One of the leaders encourages the women to sing along, as lately they have shown more interest in practicing dance moves and less interest in singing. “Malik! Make it up as you go, don’t be afraid!” He smiles from ear to ear, full of energy as he welcomes shy younger members. “You can’t learn it if you don’t practice it!” In between songs, or during songs, people might talk together, as much as they are able when the room is filled with the sound of the drums. Not everyone gets up to dance; some participants practice the arm movements from their seated positions while watching other dancers. Some people check their cell phones for
messages, or take photos or videos from their seats. Some children play video games on cell phones, while their parents dance. Participants keep arriving for the next half hour, filling the chairs, watching, singing, and dancing. The relaxed manner allows for people to make connections with others when they want to, or to sit back and watch and listen as they like.

Sometimes the lead drummer will take the time to introduce new invitational songs during practice sessions. He might be the only one singing, or one or two other knowledgeable singers might join him. The remaining participants sit and listen, and sometimes after the singers finish a song, ask about its provenance. The introduction of new songs is sometimes a slow process, taking months or years, and quick for some songs, depending its difficulty, and the makeup of the participants who attend regularly.

By seven o’clock, the lead drummer will have started singing the motion dances for the remaining hour. Motion dances are songs with specific choreographed dance motions that tell stories. Many of these dances generally have been passed down from elders who knew them as children to this new generation of Kingikmiut, who have been practicing in Anchorage for the last quarter century. One popular Kingikmiut song is called “Fishing for Flounders,” with motions illustrating women jigging for fish through a hole in the thick sea ice in winter. Another song represents picking greens and berries, mixing them with reindeer tallow, and producing and tasting a delicacy called agutuk. Another song tells the story of hunting for seals, and bringing the harvest home to share with a pretty woman. Each song is no longer than
a minute, and during practice sessions, they might repeat a song once again, or even a third time, especially if they haven’t practiced a particular selection in a while. Occasionally the younger women will discuss dance motions amongst themselves, or ask Roy, a lead drummer, for confirmation of dance moves or song texts.

At some point during the evening, there might be announcements about upcoming performances, meetings, or community events of interest to participants. Sometimes the leaders bring up issues that need the attention of the whole group. Sometimes there will be announcements or requests for prayers in regards to family members or relatives who have passed on. Birthdays are celebrated with song. The break in dancing and singing gives people a chance to catch their breath before they resume the practice session. Depending on the upcoming performance schedule, they might review a core repertoire of dances, or, if there is time, revisit rarer dances, or introduce new songs. The session wraps up with one or two invitational dances, where dancers improvise their dance motions to the beats of the drums. Practice sessions end promptly by eight o’clock in the evening, as the security guard on duty usually wants to close up the building.

2.2 Qazgi: Community House

The Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage hold their practice sessions in the lobby or meeting room of a tribal office building in an urban center because of its central location, availability, and little or no cost afforded to a group of associated tribal members that upholds traditional activities. This urban community
center has its roots in the qazgi, the traditional Inupiaq village community building. This section examines the idea of traditional qazgit.

The idea of the qazgi, or community hall, is not a new one, but stems from the stories of the ancestors and of outside observers. In the time of the ancestors, the qazgi was a place of learning and teaching, a place for working on hunting tools, a place for telling stories, a place for dispensing justice, a gymnasium, a place for celebrations, a place for feasts, dances, worship, and welcoming guests (J. E. Senungetuk 1982, 50; MacLean 1986, 2; J. Wickersham 1902b, 223; Ellanna 1983, 52; Molly Lee and Reinhardt 2003, 108–10; Burch 2006, 105; Fair 2000, 469). In historic times, the Cape Prince of Wales was populous enough to support between two and four qazgit (Ellanna 1983, 53; Larson 1995, 208; Ray 1975, 149), and perhaps as many as five (Ehrlich 2010, 55). Wales was one of the largest communities in Alaska in the nineteenth century, with scholars estimating a population of five hundred to six hundred residents in the early nineteenth century (Ray 1975, 110), to upwards of eight hundred for the same time period (Burch 2006, 7). There was even an estimate of nine hundred residents in Wales by the explorers of the Western Union Telegraph expedition of 1865-1867, which scholar Dorothy Jean Ray deemed an over-exaggeration (Ray 1975, 165). The community at the Cape Prince of Wales was large enough at times to be conceived of as a collective of four districts: Agianamiut, Kiatanamiut, Kashigatavik, and Singluraruk, each with its own qazgi (Harritt 2010, 58). As institutions, membership in qazgit were formed along family lines, often lead by umialit, or whaling captains (Burch 2006, 105). Over time,
district *qazgi* sites were abandoned, but they are still spoken of by residents of Wales (Harritt 2010, 58).

Much literature claims that historic *qazgit* were used mainly by men on a daily basis, especially during the winter seasons, when the men were not out hunting and fishing (H. R. Thornton 1931, 109; Ray 1975, 106; Larson 1991, 167; Molly Lee and Reinhardt 2003, 109; Burch 2006, 105). In the *qazgi*, men would create, prepare, and repair hunting equipment, discuss politics, teach the young men, and sing and drum. According to scholar Ernest Burch, women normally entered the *qazgi* only to serve food, except in the case of special community events such as dances, festivals, feasts, and major storytelling events (Burch 2006, 105). Interestingly, Kingikmiut Joe Senungetuk writes about the *qazgi* as a workspace for the women to tan, split, and sew walrus hides together to cover *umiat* or skinboats used for whale hunting (J. E. Senungetuk 1982, 50–51). According to Ron Senungetuk, 14 when he was a young child in the 1930s and 40s, the children of the village would play in the *qazgi* when the men went out hunting (Ron Senungetuk, personal communication, June 21, 2016). For music and dance, the *qazgi* was the main place for community celebrations. A brief exploration of historic descriptions and contemporary analyses of early *qazgit* is presented here to provide a sense of where Kingikmiut practiced music and dance in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Traditional *qazgit* in Wales were built with driftwood, sod, animal bone, animal skin, and animal membranes. In his memoir, Joe Senungetuk writes an

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14 Ron Senungetuk is the author’s father and Joe Senungetuk’s older brother.
extensive description of one of the last qazgit that remained in Wales when he was a young boy, in the 1940s. He describes the materials, the size of the interior, and the tunnel entrance leading into the main room:

The exterior of the Khazghi does not shout out its presence. Rather it is like an extension of the whole countryside. Driftwood was used for its sides; but unlike a log cabin, it is further fortified with sod, almost to the top of the structure. The roof is also made of rough-hewn driftwood logs laid against a shaped log, which is placed lengthwise along the top of the shallow gable. Then it too is covered with sod, which grows green with grass during the summer. Near the top is an opening with translucent animal tissue, used in the days before the introduction of cold glass.

The interior of the Khazghi is entered only through the south side. This entrance, also made of logs, is unusually long, about twelve feet by five feet high and four feet wide. The inner doorway is slightly smaller, about three feet wide and four feet high, so that it could be easily protected by a skin door. The interior seems extraordinarily spacious, due to the sunken floor. The floor space measures about eighteen feet square. The west, or door side, is bare earth to the middle north-south division, where it is covered by wide planks to the eastern wall. Along the north, east, and south walls, above the floor planks, are benches attached approximately three feet from the floor, about eighteen inches wide. The height of the wall extends for another four feet from the seats, and the center of the room is about ten feet high. (J. E. Senungetuk 1982, 50–51).

Senungetuk’s description highlights the use of wooden floor planks and benches along the walls. His memory of the entrance to the qazgi is of a skin door on the west wall, instead of the hole in the center of the floor, as described next by James Wickersham. Ron Senungetuk confirmed that they used this style of door during his childhood (personal communication, June 21, 2016).

Observations made by early teachers and government administrators corroborate Joe Senungetuk’s description of the qazgi. Judge James Wickersham was appointed to Alaska’s third judicial district in 1900, based in Eagle City, along the
Yukon River near the Canadian border. In 1902 he took a trip by dogsled across the territory to the Cape Prince of Wales (H. J. Wickersham 2009, 122), where he spent two weeks and observed the construction of a qazgi (J. Wickersham 1902a, 187) and how the people used it in ceremonies. Wickersham’s estimates of the interior measurements were slightly larger than those given by Senungetuk:

There are two koz-ge’s in the village of Kin-ne-gan, at the Cape Prince of Wales, one in the upper village and one in the lower. They are alike except that the lower village is much the largest. The one in the lower town, is twenty-four feet square on the inside; it is reached by a covered entrance ten or twelve feet wide, and forty feet long, extending under the koz-ge floor, whence you emerge by rising through a hole eighteen inches in diameter, into the room. This hole-door is somewhat ornamented by flat ivory pieces, inserted in the floor-puncheons about two inches back around the whole. The edge is rounding from these ivory strips to the whole; opposite, and where each persons face rises from the hole, on the east side, there is inserted in the floor a carving of a whale, made of a small hard stone with blue and white spots in it. (J. Wickersham 1902b, 223)

Wickersham specifies the measurements given are for the qazgi in the “lower village,” and indicates that it was larger than the other qazgi in use in Wales at the time. The measurements from either Wickersham or Senungetuk give the reader a sense for the average size of a typical qazgi in Wales, whether it was between eighteen and twenty-four feet square.

In his memoir, Harrison Thornton provides a description of the qazgi that corroborates the descriptions and measurements given by Senungetuk and Wickersham (H. R. Thornton 1931, 109–10). In addition, he describes the anteroom that was made of snow, indicating its use during the winter season:

There is an anteroom at the front, which is built of blocks of snow. Its dimensions are approximately 25 feet in length, 7 feet in height and 10
feet in width. If you wish to visit the *kosge*, you must pass from this antechamber into a tunnel, which is about 15 feet long and so low that you are almost sure to strike your head against the short logs that compose its roof. The floor of the passage is generally paved with broad flat bones taken from a whale. Having successfully ‘run the gantlet’ through this little tunnel, you find yourself under the floor of the *kosge* proper. Just overhead is a circular hole (about 2 feet across); and, stepping upon a whale vertebra to assist your ascent, you raise your head and shoulders up through this entrance—to be greeted with many cordial grunts of welcome. After swinging yourself up, several of the club-men invite you (by motioning) to sit beside them. You accept one of the invitations, jump up on the bench and look around. (H. R. Thornton 1931, 110)

Thornton’s description highlights the use of whalebones, including vertebrae used as steps and floor “boards” made from flat bones. Archaeologist Roger Harritt also noticed the use of walrus and seal skulls in the construction of houses in Wales through examination of archival photographs from the same time period (Harritt 2010, 60).

Teacher Suzanne Bernardi was hired to teach in Wales in 1901 first as an assistant to Ellen Lopp, one of the first teachers in Wales, and eventually assume full responsibility for teaching in the village. During her stay in Wales for the school year 1901-1902, Bernardi took photographs and collected objects that she sold to the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania (Fair 2003, 357-365). In 1912 Bernardi published an article in the Louisville, Kentucky, *Courier-Journal*, detailing her residency in Wales, including a description of the *qazgi*. Her very personal description not only gives a sense of the building, but also her reactions to her experience at a dance celebration:

I found myself packed very tightly between Norwadluk, my chaperone, and Egedlenna, whose hands I grasped firmly. In the
darkness I knew only that we were slowly moving, but I could see or feel nothing but the snow walls of the narrowing passage.

I bumped my head on an overhanging timber, causing me to crouch instantly. We were now in a narrow hall some thirty-five feet from the outer entrance. Not a sound was heard but the labored breathing of the crouching line of humanity.

Soon Egedlenna, who was moving ahead of me, lifted herself up through the hole in the floor, which was up to her arm pits. Being small and active I easily gained an entrance. Feeling strange and shy, sheeplike, I followed my chaperone. We hastily climbed, stumbled, fell and pushed into a corner of the Kosga.

Panting and nearly suffocated, I surveyed my new surroundings. The room was twenty-four by twenty-six feet, surmounted by a hip roof, in the center of which was an opening about three feet square, the only means of ventilating the overcrowded room. The air was now stifling, for within these four walls were 187 souls.

Six well-made young men of the receiving tribe composed the orchestra, their bared upper bodies lending a realistic touch to the weird scene. On their heads were crowns made of ermine beaded and feathered, while one wore a wolf head skin.

The drums were shaped like barrel hoops, covered with tanned bladders from the walrus. The drum is struck only on the frame with a stick to produce the simple rhythm as an accompaniment to dancing and singing. (Bernardi 1912)

For the contemporary reader, a striking detail that stands out in Bernardi’s description is in regards to how many people were crowded into a single room. Bernardi counted (or perhaps estimated) nearly two hundred people in a room little bigger than the size of a contemporary two-car garage. Bernardi noticed the group limited their number of drummers to six, whereas the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage of today may often have six to fifteen drummers at a typical practice session, which is held in a conference room of at least twice the size. Usually the total number of participants in a typical Anchorage practice session is about thirty, so the room is much less crowded than in Bernardi’s experience.
Bernardi continues her description of the *qazgi* interior, detailing gender roles and seats for guests and hosts:

All the women either stood or sat on the floor. Removed from the floor four feet and attached to the wall all around the room was a single board seat occupied by the men. Only one side of the room was occupied by the receiving tribe, the other side being reserved for the dancing and visiting guests.

To accommodate the crowd, rude galleries were made of cache poles and roughly-hewn slabs of driftwood. On one side these extended nearly to the roof, allowing room for about twenty small boys, like so many sardines packed in their naked glory, their heads peeping out over the edge of the gallery to better view the dancing below. (Bernardi 1912)

The men sat on the bench, much as Thornton described from over a decade earlier.

The Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage also practice a division of seats by gender in the present day. For practice sessions, the men sit in chairs placed a row with their backs to the far wall. The women sit in chairs placed by the opposite wall and surrounding side-walls, so that while seated, everyone is facing one another. For performances, the men sit in chairs in a single row, with the women sitting in chairs in a row directly behind the men. Young children often follow their parent or grandparent, or other relative, regardless of gender.

Thornton describes the wood of the interior of the *qazgi* as “blackened with the smoke of past decades” (H. R. Thornton 1931, 113). He does not describe where the smoke that blackened the planks came from. However, Bernardi describes the traditional seal oil lamps that provide light and heat in the *qazgi*, and possibly the added to the patina of the wood:

In front of the feast dishes, in a blaze of glory, sat the shallow, bow-shaped seal oil ceremonial lamp, fully a gallon of new seal oil
filled in the depth of two inches, while wicks of twisted moss stood out in tufts all over it, producing a clear flame. An old man tended the lamp, carefully lifting the wicks out of the oil with a slender jade stick as they burned low. Five of these lamps cast a soft glow over the fantastic scene. (Bernardi 1912)

Burch makes note of several authors who report that seal oil gives off little or no smoke when burned, but also points out that oil lamps were a suspected source of black lung disease (Burch 2006, 225). In any case, the air in the qazgi was not always fresh. Thornton takes note of his donation of kerosene lamps, but found that they did not work well inside the qazgi due to lack of ventilation. “We generally contributed two of our kerosene lamps to augment the illumination, that afforded by the native lamps (fed with animal oil) being rather feeble. The foulness of the air may be judged from the fact that our lights would go out within an hour, if placed near the top of the room” (H. R. Thornton 1931, 113).

Bernardi’s description of the qazgi activities remains one of the most detailed illustrations available from early twentieth century. She describes how the entire assembly sang with the leader.

The medicine man started a song. The drums beat time. Every person of both sexes and all ages, from chief to poorest orphan of the village, sang loud and long, while all eyes gazed intently at the hole in the floor.

Presently a form would appear with head hung low on his breast, only his back showing in grotesque rhythmic motions. This is Eskimo dancing. (Bernardi 1912)

While Bernardi’s choice of words reveals a somewhat judgmental interpretation of the dancing, consideration may be given to her point of reference to Euro-American dances common to the era. She also made note of the fact that Inupiaq dancers
typically faced the drummers during their performances, turning their backs toward her, instead of facing the audience as a Euro-American performer would. These days, dancers and drummers both face the audience, adapting their performance to Euro-American style audience expectations, where the audience can see the dancers’ and singers’ faces.

From a musical standpoint, one wonders about the acoustic or resonant qualities of the historic *qazgi*. Thorton, Wickersham, and Bernardi all confirm Senungetuk’s description of the use of wood or bone floor planks in the interior of the *qazgi*, materials that might be acoustically beneficial for sound production (cf. Bucur 2006, chapter 3.3). However, considering Bernardi’s description of a room that was about twenty-four feet square that was occupied by nearly two hundred people, the acoustics had to have been somewhat dampened by participants and other items brought in for comfort. In his article regarding Yup’ik and Alutiiq men’s houses, ethnoarchaeologist Jesús Salius Gumà suggests that “The men’s house was…a space that was largely acoustically dead, since the wooden walls, roof and floor, grass mats, animal skins on the benches, and the large number of people inside permitted virtually no resonance” (Gumà 2014, 215). Still, it may be difficult to determine the exact acoustic conditions without actually rebuilding a *qazgi* in the old style and performing music inside. Using archival images and archaeological studies of excavations, archaeologist Roger Harritt suggests that a double-walled construction was unique to the Cape Prince of Wales as well as the village of St. Michaels in the building of nineteenth-century *qazgit* (Harritt 2010). Nineteenth-century Kingikmiut
used two sets of driftwood logs or planks, one horizontal and one vertical, to create qazgi walls, that perhaps had more of a resonance than Gumâ offers, especially in light his essay, which is in reference to kashim (community houses) of Yup’ik and Alutiiq cultures.

With the advent of colonization in Alaska, qazgit began to disappear in the early twentieth century. Depending on the philosophy of missionaries and school administrators, and their tolerance for ceremonial dances and celebrations, mission churches and schools pressured communities to eliminate qazgit. The qazgit in Utqiagvik (Barrow) were among the earliest to be torn down and used as firewood, as early as 1900-1901, and most of the North Slope communities followed suit by 1910 (Larson 1995, 215). One of the last permanent Inupiaq qazgi structures to remain standing in Alaska was at the Cape Prince of Wales in the late 1950s (Ross 1958, 116; Larson 1995, 215). In his memoir of 1971, Joe Senungetuk confirms his recollections of the qazgi from his childhood in Wales in the present tense: “The Khazghi is an ancient communal building, the only authentic village house, in the true Eskimo style, left in Wales” (J. E. Senungetuk 1982, 49).

In an article, anthropologist Mary Ann Larson discusses how the community of Point Hope has retained the functional activities of the qazgi, even though the physical traditional buildings had been torn down earlier in the twentieth century. The community maintains two rival qazgit affiliations, which is reflected in the whaling crew memberships, their feasts, and their neighborhood layouts surrounding feast

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15 Also see section 1.2 American Influences for more about intolerance for Inupiaq dance and music.
sites. In this way, Larson suggests that, at least in Point Hope, the institution of the qazgi has not been lost, even though the old structures are gone. She even suggests the evidence in the maintenance of songs by different houses: “Whaling crew captains have strong qargi ties and Unasiksikaaq and Qagmaqtuuq still maintain ownership of qargi songs” (Larson 1995, 216–17). Larson believes that the institution of the qazgi no longer exists in Wales, “at least in any recognizable form” (Larson 1995, 217). She suggests searching for material objects associated with activities of the qazgi, and even looking for the arrangement of neighborhoods as vestiges of qazgi associations. I suggest the functions of the Wales qazgit are being maintained by the members of the Kingikmiut Dancers of Singers of Anchorage, in a new setting, as extensions of Kingikmiut community via the activities of music and dance.

2.3 Community

Scholars and observers have used a variety of words to define the word qazgi, ranging from “men’s house” (J. Wickersham 1902b, 223; Bogojavlensky and Fuller 1973, 69), to “meeting house” (Lopp Smith and Smith 2001, 10), “assembly house” (Wells and Kelly 1890, 24; H. R. Thornton 1931, 109), “ceremonial house” (Spencer 1959, 182; Fair 2000, 469; Molly Lee and Reinhardt 2003, 108; Harritt 2010, 59), to “community house” (Senungetuk 1971, 44; Ray 1975, 106; Ellanna 1983, 51; Larson 2004, 1; Burch 2006, 105). Authors have discounted the idea that qazgit were used solely by men in Inupiaq communities (J. E. Senungetuk 1982, 51; Larson 1991, 168; Burch 2006, 105). The descriptors “meeting house,” “assembly house,” “ceremonial
house,” and “community house” reflect the functional roles of the qazgi by the people of the community, as a place for general meetings and ceremonial practices. The word choice I have heard the most in colloquial use is “community house.” For the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage, the regular weekly practice sessions held in an office building serve as a time and space where Kingikmiut living in Anchorage can perform elements of the qazgi community house in the manner rooted in qazgit of historical times. They create a sense of Kingikmiut community within the larger urban center of Anchorage.

But what is meant by the term “community?” Are the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage a distinct community within Anchorage, the largest urban center in Alaska? Musicologist Gregory Barz suggests that “a ‘community’ can be defined as a group of people that gathers for a reason: whether to remember and recall, to share, or to create new experiences” (emphasis in the original, Barz 2006, 25). In this broad sense, the fact that Kingikmiut gather on a weekly basis to practice Kingikmiut cultural performance makes them a community, within the city of Anchorage. As Ugiuvangmiut Inupiaq anthropologist Deanna Kingston points out, in the past, the word “community” often associated people with a certain place (D. Kingston and Marino 2010, 120). Indeed, the word for “community” in Inupiaq languages is nunaaqqiq, which derives from the word nuna, meaning “land” or “territory” (MacLean 2014, 210). Similarly, definition (2b) for the word “community” provided in the Oxford English Dictionary indicates “a body of people who live in the same place” (“Community, n.” 2016). However, scholar Dorothy Jean
Ray points out that in Inupiaq languages, the suffix “-miut” is added to a regional place name to indicate “the people of” a region; thus “Kingikmiut” are “the people of Kingigin,” whether or not they are actually inhabiting the place. This is because in prehistoric times Inupiat were often nomadic within a larger territory during the course of a typical year, and would maintain a home in different locations for extended periods, but would still call themselves by their main home location (Ray 1975, 106). Anthropologist Anne Fienup-Riordan differentiates between the ideas of physical location and the extended ethnic group by using the words “village” to denote place and “community” to indicate the people who are from a place, thus acknowledging the mobility of Yup’ik peoples as expanding their villages to include places like Anchorage (Fienup-Riordan 2000, 152). In this way, as people who are from Kingigin or descendants of original inhabitants of Kingigin, Anchorage Kingikmiut maintain their sense of community at weekly dance practice sessions because they gather for a reason, to practice their style of Inupiaq dance and music.

While the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage maintain a community within Anchorage, their presence in Anchorage deserves further consideration. The individual participants of the group are generally from the Native Village of Wales, or descendants of people who are from Wales, or are related through marriage.16 One might consider that they are in diaspora, as they live away from their ancestral village. Other scholars suggest a variety of ideas that might

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16 There are a few participants who practice with the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage who are not directly related to Kingikmiut of Wales, but in general, the membership is defined by heritage.
describe the situation with more lucidity, such as cosmobility, deterritorialization, urbanization, or “Native hubs.”

### 2.3.1 Diaspora

Are participants of the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage in “diaspora?” They are practicing Inupiaq music and dance in Anchorage, an urban environment that is located over six hundred miles away from their ancestral homeland, Kingigin, also known as the Native Village of Wales, located at the tip of the Seward Peninsula of Alaska. Many of the dance group’s participants have never lived in the Native Village of Wales, as they grew up in other places. For instance, I grew up in Fairbanks, Alaska, and only visited the village with my parents a few times as a young child. Even though the dance group has made a point of taking a select group of participants to visit the Kingikmiut Dance Festival in Wales each year for the past seventeen years, some group members have not been able to visit the place where their ancestors spent their lives, due to busy schedules, the high cost of travel to get to Wales, or other reasons.\(^\text{17}\) Some of the participants have recently moved to Anchorage from Wales, and seem to enjoy having familiar cultural practice sessions to attend to in the city. Yet the group continues to meet in Anchorage regularly to practice this very particular culture associated with this particular place, paying particular attention to keeping to the traditions of “how they do it in Wales.”

\(^\text{17}\) Even short visits to Wales require a certain readiness for rugged terrain and harsh weather, lack of running water, no hotels (accommodations are one’s own sleeping bag on the church floor, school classroom floors, or the “Multi-purpose Community Building” office floor), and few motor vehicles except all-terrain-vehicles for transport.
In a way, the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage may be thought of as being in diaspora. In an article discussing ethnomusicologists’ use of the term “diaspora,” Mark Slobin states: “At its simplest, [diaspora] merely marks the existence of an identified population that feels away from its homeland, however imagined, however distant in time and space” (Slobin 2012, 97). Using this generalized definition, members of the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage currently meet to learn about and practice their Inupiaq culture, a culture that never traditionally existed in the locale of the Anchorage Bowl or Southcentral Alaska until recent decades. They are practicing their culture in a location that is distant from their ancestral homelands, albeit within the state of Alaska. It is fair to say that the group’s members live in Anchorage by personal choice—for work, for access to healthcare services, for access to higher education, by marriage, or as second or third generation descendants of Kingikmiut who moved to the city in previous decades.

Of course, many scholars have noted the etymology and flexibility of the association of the word “diaspora” in academia and specifically in ethnomusicological contexts. Quoting Khachig Tölölyan, Slobin points out how early on, the word “diaspora” had strong associations with Jewish, Greek, and Armenian histories of movement, but more recently has come to inhabit a broader sense, meaning “immigrant, expatriate, refugee, guestworker, exile community, overseas community, ethnic community” (Slobin 2012, 96). Certainly as an “ethnic community” in Anchorage, Kingikmiut practice a culture that is foreign to the
majority of residents of the city. But by no means do they consider themselves an “exile” community, as the individual members choose to live in the city. Indeed, some Alaska Native villages have recently instituted the traditional practice of banishment from their villages for offenses that disrupt their communities (Hopkins 2013), but the members of the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage live in the city of their own free will. Neither are they associated directly with the very diverse “immigrant” or “refugee” communities present in Anchorage today, where one in every ten people is foreign-born (Saleeby 2010, 93). Finally, Kingikmiut are also neither “expatriate,” “overseas,” or “guestworkers,” as they are all citizens of the United States and living within the same state as their original homeland.

Citing William Safran’s 1991 article in the journal Diaspora, ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino took to the idea that diaspora necessitates dispersion from one homeland to multiple locations. “They, or their ancestors, have been dispersed from a specific original ‘center’ to two or more ‘peripheral,’ or foreign, regions” (Turino 2004, 4). Indeed, Kingikmiut have moved and lived all over the world—I have a brother living in southern California and a cousin living in the Chicago area. But in terms of dance groups, there is only one active Kingikmiut-style group in Anchorage, at this time. On occasion there have been smaller Kingikmiut-style groups in Anchorage that splintered off, but they have generally been short-lived experiments. There are other Inupiaq dance groups that practice in Anchorage, such as the Anchorage Northern Lights Dancers, that have ancestral connections to Qikiqtarjuaq, also known as Kotzebue, a larger village north of the Seward Peninsula.
But in general, Inupiat regard each village as a separate nation, each with its own cultural ideas and language variations (Burch 2006, 7). Kingikmiut and Qikiqtagmiut may join together, especially at invitational dances at events such as the Quyana Nights at the Alaska Federation of Natives convention or other events in the city, and share a select number of songs and dances, but in general they keep their own dances as individual expressions of their home village cultures.

Interdisciplinary scholar James Clifford investigates the idea of diaspora in conjunction with Indigenous communities. In 1994 he states, “Tribal cultures are not diasporas; their sense of rootedness in the land is precisely what diasporic peoples have lost” (Clifford 1994, 310). Indeed, Kingikmiut maintain a sense of rootedness to the place of Kingigin through their dance and music, which depicts oral histories of the land and their ancestors who have lived there. Later, in a symposium given in 2000, Clifford asks, “Is there a specifically indigenous kind of diasporism? A lived dialectic of urban and rural?” (Clifford 2013, 52). Kingikmiut are not necessarily blindly following an idea of assimilation to the greater community, but bringing their culture with them to the city. They maintain connections with the village through participation in annual dance festivals, connecting with villagers who may visit the city for medical reasons, for school, or for work, and connect through social media interaction. Citing the work of Ann Fienup-Riordan and her association with Alaska Native Yupiit, Clifford determines that

Urban-based Yupiit…are not so much displaced from a homeland as extensions of it. She points to similar patterns for other Alaska Native groups. Thus it is not a question of the center holding or not, but rather one of open-ended social networks sustaining transformed connections
to land and kin. The tribal home—its animals, plants, social gatherings, shared foods, ancestors, and spiritual powers—is not imagined from a distance. It is activated, “practiced”, made meaningful in a range of sites by seasonal rituals, social gatherings, visits, and subsistence activities. “Diasporic” natives are more like offshoots than broken branches. (Clifford 2013, 84)

Similarly, the open-ended social networks are continually being developed through the activities of the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage. Even though many of the younger participants have never lived in the village, they learn about the culture of the village through the songs and dance motions, and practice meaningful connection to the place and the people through feasts and festivals. The dances themselves make reference to Kingigin and its people, and the ancestral way of life associated with it.

As scholar Vera Parham points out in a collection of essays titled Native Diasporas, the word “diaspora” is not often used to describe Native American experiences (Parham 2014, 318). While some aspects of the idea of the idea of diaspora may fit with Kingikmiut of Anchorage, such as Slobin’s sense for simply being away from one’s homeland, other aspects, such as the idea of an implied power relationship, may not. “Diaspora also implies a power relationship, one in which a people have been forced from their homelands” (Parham 2014, 318). This aspect does not necessarily hold true here, as individuals of the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage live in Anchorage by choice. Canadian scholars Evelyn Peters and Carol Lafond articulate a similar notion by citing Henri Lefebvre’s “right to the city,” based on inhabitance, the same for Indigenous peoples as for anyone else
(Peters and Lafond 2013, 88–89). As citizens of the United States, Kingikmiut have the obvious rights of any other citizen to live in any city they choose.

2.3.2 Cosmobility

Ethnomusicologist Su Zheng points out that the word “diaspora” has been so popular in recent years that it stands to take on a new essence, perhaps not as complimentary as intended. “As diaspora gains currency in our shifting intellectual tradition of ethnomusicology under the influence of social-science studies, it also stands at the dangerous edge of losing its critical power and becoming merely a trendy generic descriptive term substituting for migrants, exiles, refugees, immigrants, minorities, and ethnics” (Zheng 2010, 18). Perhaps this trendy term will eventually give way to new ideas that can better describe what is happening in Anchorage.

Indeed, some scholars have been inventive with seeking ways to describe the phenomenon of rural-urban migration in Alaska. Anthropologist Hannah Voorhees adapted Noel Salazar’s idea of “cosmobility” (“figurative cosmopolitan mobility,” see Salazar 2010, 16) to interrupt the idea of outmigration from village to city as necessitating cultural loss in favor of assimilation. “In contrast…cosmobility entails a positive reinterpretation of mobility, not as involuntary displacement but as an extension of vibrant Alaska Native culture and ‘portable’ cosmologies, which, in this view, can persist and flourish autonomously of territory” (Voorhees 2010, 66). Rather than checking their culture at the village, so to speak, Kingikmiut (and other Alaska
Native peoples) bring their cultural practices and ways of knowing, or cosmologies, to Alaska’s largest city. There, they create qazgîit in the city, spaces that allow for the transmission of knowledge, the practice of culture, and the space to welcome Native ways of being. Their Indigenous worldviews are mobile, regardless of place. Akin to Clifford’s idea of “offshoots,” Voorhees’ idea that Alaska Native cultures that are brought to the city as “extensions” of homeland cosmology brings a different flavor than total displacement or removal from one’s homeland as the word “diaspora” suggests.

2.3.3 Deterritorialization

Anthropologist Ann Fienup-Riordan suggests the idea of “deterritorialization” when discussing Yup’ik communities in Anchorage as extensions of Yup’ik villages (Fienup-Riordan 2000, 152–53). Citing Michael Kearney (Kearney 1995) and Arjun Appadurai (Appadurai 1996), Fienup-Riordan argues that Yupiit as well as other Alaska Natives live in a context of global mobility and massive migration, but still maintain ties with their home communities. “Along with other Alaska Native groups, and in opposition to millions of refugees and migrants the world over, their strength lies in the fact that although they travel ever farther from home, most still have villages to return to” (Fienup-Riordan 2000, 153). This sense of home is paramount to the existence of the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage, as even though they practice in a deterritorialized space, they practice songs that recall their ancestral homeland. The Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage practice songs that
refer to specific places, such as the song often referred to as “Agheanamiut,” which recalls the people of the district “Agianamiut,” the area on the seaward edge of the hillside on the southern end of the settlement at the Cape Prince of Wales (Ray 1975, 111). They also practice songs that refer to animals that Kingikmiut hunt in the region of the Cape Prince of Wales, such as the “Polar Bear,” “Seal Hunter,” and “Reindeer,” none of which are animals that are native to the Anchorage region. The deterritorialization of the dance group does not mean that they relinquish their cultural identity; rather they are expanding throughout Alaska.

2.3.4 Urbanization

Perhaps a simpler way of thinking of Kingikmiut living in Anchorage is the idea of urbanization. Researcher Carolyn Stephens reports that in 2007, the world’s population had become more urban than rural, and that in many countries, more than half of the world’s Indigenous peoples live in cities (Stephens 2015, 55). More specifically focused on peoples of the Arctic, in 2014 Joan Nymand Larsen and Gail Fondahl comment on the noticeable accelerated trend of outmigration from rural villages to urban centers in the ten years since their last publication on a similar topic (Larsen and Fondahl 2014, 21). The study of urbanization of Alaska Natives is not a new idea (Hippler 1971; Fogel-Chance 1993), but continually revised with newer research (Howe 2009; Dybbroe, Dahl, and Müller-Wille 2010).

A report generated from the 2010 U.S. Census regarding The American Indian and Alaska Native Population states that “the majority of the American Indian and
Alaska Native alone-or-in-combination population (78 percent) lived outside of American Indian and Alaska Native areas” (Norris, Vines, and Hoeffel 2012, 12), including tribal designated areas or village statistical areas. This fact shows American Indians and Alaska Natives have preference for choosing where they live. The same report shows that Anchorage is the U.S. city that has the largest proportion of American Indian and Alaska Native residents, at 12.4 percent of the total population of Anchorage, which is currently counted at 291,826 (Norris, Vines, and Hoeffel 2012, 11–13). The U.S. Census Bureau table “Race Reporting for the American Indian and Alaska Native Population by Selected Tribes” shows that within Anchorage, people who self-identify as “Inupiat” total 4,018 (6,103 who identify as Inupiat in combination with any other race group) (Bureau 2016). As reporter Mike Dunham notes, that means there are more Inupiat living in Anchorage than in Utqiaġvik (Barrow) (1,989 Inupiat) and Kotzebue (1,752 Inupiat) combined (Dunham 2011). By contrast, the Native Village of Wales currently has a population of about 162 (Kawerak, Inc. 2012).  

Indeed, Anchorage is Alaska’s largest Alaska Native “village” (Dunham 2011).

Several scholars point out reasons why Alaska Native people make a move to more urban areas. The most popular reasons are for employment opportunities, increased healthcare opportunities, relationships, educational opportunities, or more reasonable cost of living and housing availability (Fogel-Chance 1993, 95; Molly Lee 2002, 6; S. Martin, Killorin, and Colt 2008, 9; Lowe 2010, 76). Just after World War

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18 Scholar Dorothy Jean Ray estimates that Wales was one of the largest villages in the Bering Strait region, if not all of Alaska, in the early nineteenth century, at 500 to 600 residents (Ray 1975, 110–11).
II, at age fifteen, my father left Wales to attend boarding high school in Sitka, Alaska, because at the time, the school in Wales run by the Bureau of Indian Affairs did not offer education past the eighth grade. Shortly after that, his immediate family moved from Wales to Nome in search of better employment opportunities for his parents and better educational opportunities for his younger siblings (J. E. Senungetuk 1982, 103–4). My father never moved back to the village of Wales, but found his life’s work in Fairbanks at the University of Alaska. As a consequence, my brother and I grew up in a suburban neighborhood and rarely experienced village life. People living and growing up in Anchorage or other urban areas experience a different lifestyle than those people who grow up in the village of Wales—full of opportunities in higher education and jobs, supplemented by more available healthcare services, but one has to search for opportunities to practice traditional ways of living, such as subsistence hunting and Inupiaq dance groups.

Kingikmiut have been living in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau, or other urban areas outside of the state of Alaska for decades. Within the participants of the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage, one young woman claims to have started practicing with the group when she was a baby, when she started learning from her uncle, cousins, and grandmother (field notes, July 28, 2016). Now, a quarter of a century later, she brings her two young sons to practice sessions on a regular basis. The Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage can count four generations in the current membership, and at least two of those generations have grown up in urban setting, while the latest generation is just beginning as young children. Rather
than become homogeneous with the wider Anchorage community, however, the fact that the dance group continually asserts its own style of Inupiaq cultural performance proves there is an emergence of urban identities, as suggested by Ann Fienup-Riordan (Fienup-Riordan 2000, 168).

2.3.5 Native Hubs

Anthropologist Renya K. Ramirez, Winnebago of Nebraska, begins her book *Native Hubs* (2007) by acknowledging that the majority of Native Americans live in cities (Ramirez 2007, 1). Crediting the idea of “Native hubs” to Laverne Roberts, Paiute, Ramirez describes the idea: “Like a hub on a wheel…urban Indians occupy the center, connected to their tribal communities by social networks represented by the wheel’s spokes” (Ramirez 2007, 2). Rather than relying on colonial ideas of relegating Indigenous peoples to live in their allotted reservations or village statistical areas, the idea of the hub recognizes the continued mobility and connectivity of Native Americans. The hub suggests connections to geographical places, such as ancestral homelands, as well as virtual connections. Virtual connections can be anything that help people maintain cultural relationships, such as storytelling, music, newsletters, online social networking media, or other forms of connectivity that are based in ideas. The wheel also symbolizes mobility, or travel between city sites and village sites, encouraging the transmission of information in multiple directions.

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19 Alaska Native land claims were treated by the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) of 1971 (P.L. 92-203), with the exception of one reservation in Southeast Alaska, resulting in corporate landholding organizations and shareholders (Jones 1981).
Bringing the idea of the hub into conversation with the idea of diaspora studies, Ramirez sees the hub as a sense of rootedness, even as one is away from a geographical homeland. “Diaspora discourse usually concentrates on displacement, loss, and a deferred desire for homeland. The hub, rather than focusing on displacement, emphasizes urban Indians’ strong rooted connection to tribe and homeland” (Ramirez 2007, 12). She notes that even as they take up residence in urban areas that may be in different locales from their tribal homelands, Native Americans don’t leave their cultures behind, but bring their sense of cultural identity with them. This is true for Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage, who bring the sense of Kingigin to the city through dance and music.

The idea of the hub resonates with findings of researcher Marie Lowe, who notices the complexity of migration in Alaska. It is not necessarily always one direction, and not necessarily only one time: “rural to urban migration in Alaska is complex and demonstrates return and/or circular migrations as well: repeated movement between Anchorage and rural communities whereby some families and children appear to be living a dual existence” (Lowe 2010, 76). The movement between communities allows for the transmission of ideas in several directions: from ancestral villages to urban areas, in between different tribal groups within the urban area, and from urban areas to villages. This instance is true for participants in the Kingikmiut Singers and Dancers of Anchorage, especially for several young men who have come to Anchorage to try out living and working in the city, only to move back to Nome or Wales after a few months or a few years. Yet whenever they show up to
Anchorage to attend conferences or for healthcare services, they come back to Monday night dance practices just as before, and are welcomed by the group. It is also true in the case of transmission of ideas between different dance groups in the city, whose members may share ideas, and even songs and dance moves, and yet when individuals or groups return to their ancestral village, the changes are evident when they share new ideas with their relatives back home.

In general, Alaskans can relate to the idea of the hub, as the word is used throughout rural Alaska in regards to the larger villages that are off the road system that serve as hub sites for distribution of goods and services and transportation. For someone who is visiting Alaska for the first time, a community such as Nome, Bethel, or Kotzebue, each with a few thousand residents, may seem like a small town in comparison with cities such as Seattle or Los Angeles. But these towns serve as hub villages for ten or more smaller villages in the area, and attract people for shopping, health care services, or gatherings for cultural events. Ramirez’ idea of the hub resonates with modern Alaskan living.

Whether one thinks about members of the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage as being in diaspora, having a sense of cosmobility, living in a deterritorialized state, as urbanized Alaska Natives, or living and participating in Native hubs, they are an ethnic minority in Anchorage. In an essay, historians Stephen Langdon and Aaron Leggett (Dena’ina Athabascan) point out that the Euro-American leaders of Anchorage have had a history of erasing evidence of Indigenous peoples’ existence in the region as a way of establishing their own sense of
sovereignty. “The Euro-American leaders of Anchorage have positioned the history of the city as a trajectory of European and American cultural history, primarily because the intellectual and cultural atmosphere of the mid-twentieth century viewed Native American rights and concerns as an unwanted relic to be eradicated” (Langdon and Leggett 2009, 165). The fact that the Alaska Native cultural groups present in Anchorage persist in maintaining their cultural habits such as performative arts demonstrates the strength of the communities and the individual participants who insure the traditions continue for the sake of the ancestors of the past and future generations.

The Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage practice every Monday night in a modern office building in the heart of Alaska’s largest city. Their practice sessions recall the essence of the ancient qazgit community centers of the ancestors that have since fallen into disuse and disappeared from existence in recent decades due to American colonizing influences of the twentieth century. Still, as a small community within Anchorage, the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage bring their culture to the city, and, as offshoots or extensions of Kingikmiut culture in Wales, they continue to practice music and dance in their Kingikmiut ways. The following sections in the remainder of this chapter describe and analyze how elements of the music and dance they practice, teach, and compose reflect the ancestral ways of Kingikmiut. After presenting a short discussion of the overall soundscape of Kingikmiut practice sessions held in the CITC office building, I introduce how
Kingikmiut practice the musical elements of tone and pitch, use vocables or syllables in place of song texts, and the sounds of the Inupiaq-style drum. Kingikmiut also reflect ancestral methods of education in the qazgi in the ways they practice transmitting knowledge to the younger generations. They have embraced a method of composing new songs by committee that may be modern, but has its roots in ancestral compositional styles. As a Native space in the city, the urban qazgi community center maintains the ways of the ancestors while embracing the ancestors of the future.

2.4 Sounds of Practice

The sounds that the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage create at practice sessions every Monday night deserve some attention. In this section, I pay attention to the sounds of regular practice sessions, the sounds of singing in terms of tone, pitch, and song text, and the sounds of drumming. The entire soundscape (Schafer 1977) is part of the experience of the Kingikmiut practice session, and indeed part of most cultural Alaska Native dance festivals around the state. Kingikmiut practice sessions are not quiet affairs where members all sit in rapt attention for the entire time, such as at a typical orchestral rehearsal where one pays complete attention to the direction given by a conductor or leader. I suggest the sounds of the practice session, including the din or soundscape, in combination with the sounds of singing and drumming, are part of an Inupiaq acoustemology, or way of making sense of the world through sound (Feld 1996, 97). The sounds of practice reflect how Inupiaq egalitarian society intersects with the environment of their
ancestral homeland of Kingigin. The sounds of the sea are reflected in the sounds of the singing, the materials and sounds of the instruments, and in the people themselves as they encourage participation rather than exclusivity.

### 2.4.1 Soundscape

The Kingikmiut practice sessions in Anchorage are full of sounds. Part social hour, part practice, people often talk to each other throughout the session, regardless of singing and drumming going on. Sometimes participants have to raise their voices to be heard over the singing and drumming, but they may carry on their conversations throughout. Very young children are allowed to wander amongst group members, and are cherished by adults, even as they talk, sing, or scream with their little vocal chords. Older children sometimes bring hand-held video games, which may hold their attention, but parents would rather have them at practice where they can absorb the sounds of Inupiaq drumming and singing even as they play their games. Teenage girls giggle as they check their *facebook* or *twitter* accounts on their smartphones. Cell phones might ring on occasion, with jangles of ringtones ranging from country songs to electronica effects, drawing the attention of their owners to run out of the room where they can hear their callers. Latecomers to practice sessions tap on the window to draw attention to themselves, the cue to the children to run down the hall to alert the security guard to let them in. At times a participant might get up in the middle of a song or in between songs to take care of personal needs, to fill a water bottle at the fountain, or to go for a smoke outside. As singers and dancers finish individual songs,
someone might let out an appreciative yelp: “Uu-ii! Uu-ii!” A participant might request to repeat a song by yelling out “Su-li!” Dancers often discuss the finer points of dance motions in between songs, sometimes asking elders to demonstrate hand motions or translate song texts. Lead drummers choose to repeat songs or move on to another song as they see fit, sometimes moving from one to the next until dancers and singers are tired and out of breath. Laughter is a major element present in every practice session, often led by elders and song leaders who have big voices. After about half an hour, there might be a break in drumming for announcements or group discussion. The atmosphere is very casual, inclusive, friendly, and loud with the sounds of drumming, singing, and chatter.

I find that the current state of literature regarding Inupiaq music lacks in discussion about the soundscape of Inupiaq musical events, and gives very little consideration for the sounds of Inupiaq musicking (Small 1998). Musicologists of the past century who have written about Inupiaq music of northwest Alaska have privileged Euro-American sensibilities and methods of study, including removing musicians from the normal context to make “clean” recordings in sterile environments. For example, Lorraine Koranda’s audio recordings of Inupiaq and Yup’ik songs published as Alaskan Eskimo Songs and Stories in 1966 and re-released in 1972 (Koranda 1972) contains samples of individual singers or singers in small groups (of up to three people) who sometimes provide very soft drum accompaniment so as not to drown out the vocal sounds, as usually happens in larger group singing and drumming. Typical Inupiaq performances are usually presented by groups of
singers, as Koranda states in her liner notes, but she chose to present individual singers in her recordings, citing that the recording of group performances “impair[s] the quality and clarity of melody and text” (Koranda 1972, Preface). In a way, while Koranda justifies her reasons for presenting single musicians in her recording, her presentation skews the normal Inupiaq experience of practicing and performing music in a group. Koranda comments that she had a difficult time finding suitable places to make recordings in some villages, where she and her informants would not be disturbed by “[c]urious children, barking dogs, or the noise of an occasional motorcycle” (Koranda 1972, Preface). From my point of view, the soundscape, including the chatter of children, dogs, and the sounds of vehicles, is part of the experience of ġġi, Inupiaq musicking and dancing. The aspect of the social gathering is just as important to the event as the singing and dancing. Perhaps to an outsider, the soundscape of practice sessions may seem distracting, leading musicologists such as Koranda to search out pristine sound environments in which to record. Here, she could isolate the songs, even asking her informants to leave out the drum sounds while they sang. Reminiscent of the photography project of Edward Curtis, artful contrivances representing romantic views of a supposedly “vanishing race” (Lyman 1982), Koranda states her purpose as “to preserve, document, and transcribe such material, which surely cannot long survive acculturation and the passing of those elderly informants who still recall the rituals and musical practices of the past” (Koranda 1972, Preface). Inupiat have certainly survived acculturation, countering the stereotype perpetuated by scholars such as Koranda even as they have moved to
urban centers. Yet there is value in Koranda’s work, as the recordings hold great interest to Inupiaq and other Alaska Native musicians as they reconnect with their ancestors through recorded sound. Koranda’s early recordings are valuable resources for musicians and scholars who want to hear the sound of the singing from mid-twentieth century Alaska Native singers.²⁰

2.4.2 Sounds of Singing—Tone

When I first joined the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage at their practice sessions in 2011, I was struck by the sound of the singing, because it has a quality that is different from Euro-American styles of singing. The lead drummer/singer has a usual way of starting each song with one or two introductory pitches. Right away, the sound of his voice has a special quality to it that is considerably nasal. As he sings the first few pitches of the song, the rest of the group recognizes which song he is singing, and joins in. During the first rendition of the song, they sing more or less together within an octave. On the repeat, the second time through the song, the singing and the drumming always have much more vigor, and some of the women sing what they call “up high,” or an octave higher than the men. The overall energy level increases, sometimes to the point of the singers becoming out of breath by the end of a short song.

²⁰ Koranda’s archival recordings are housed at the UCLA Ethnomusicology Archive: http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/kt800022kh/entire_text/ and her recording Alaskan Eskimo Songs and Stories (Koranda 1972) contains 42 samples from her archive collection.
When I started practicing with the group, there were a few young women who attended practice sessions who sang with such clarity that it surprised me. The sound is different than Euro-American classical opera or popular styles. It was clear, strong, and seemed effortless to me. As a classically trained violinist, I had desultory experience listening closely to Inupiaq singing, but had participated in Euro-American-style musical training for the greater part of my life. I remember one of my choral teachers in high school classical music camp who suggested to the students that we make a fist with one hand and try to insert it into our mouths as a way of learning how to open our mouths wide enough to sing in his chorus. This technique produces a resonating chamber in the head that is as open as one can make it, with the air flowing through the mouth fairly quickly. After several years of listening to the singers of the Kingikmiut group and other Inupiaq dance groups performing throughout the state, I started to experiment with my own voice at practice sessions in order to match the women’s styles of singing, which was different than what I experienced at my high school music camp. Instead of opening my mouth like my high school choir teacher suggested, I tried singing with my lips almost closed, but keeping my oral cavity as large as possible. I tried to use the same amount of volume of air passing through my head as when I sang with my lips completely open. As a result, it seemed like the sound of the singing started to come out through my nose. It felt like my head resonated in a different way as I sang through the cavities of my sinuses. I started to sound like the other women I had heard and admired in the
Kingikmiut dance group. I even started to get compliments from the lead drummer. At that point, I started to feel like a real contributing member of the group.

I felt validated in my new singing style when I found that other Inupiaq singers articulate the idea of singing “with your nose.” Tariek Oviuk is a lead drummer and singer with the Tikiġaq Traditional Dancers of Point Hope, Alaska. In a radio-documentary podcast led by Inupiaq recording artist Alexis Sallee, Oviuk speaks about how he learned about singing with a nasal style:

> When we’re out whaling, one of the things that was taught to me was that you put your paddle into the water and you can hear the bowhead whales, the beluga whales, you can hear the seals, the walruses and there are these neat, eloquent sounds that you could feel, like man, I don’t know what they’re saying but you could hear them communicating and they’re not only communicating to each other, but they’re communicating to us and a lot of those songs are a lot of high-pitch noises like Northern Lights sounds or something like that. There is a lot of bending and sliding, there is a lot of progressiveness to it and so we try to copy that and emulate that while we’re facing the whale liver membrane. I’ve been taught to sing with your nose to relate to the animals. (Sallee 2016, 3:08 – 3:55)

Oviuk expresses the idea that the nasal quality of the singing in his group relates to the sound of the sea mammals that are so important to the entire way of life in coastal Inupiaq communities. The method of putting the end of the paddle to one’s ear to hear the sounds of the sea mammals vibrating through the waters of the ocean is an age-old technique used by hunters for assessment of hunting prospects, but the results find their way into song. The people end up expressing what they hear out on the ocean, and bring it back to the qazgi in song, specifically through timbre or quality of tone. Oviuk also mentions bending and sliding between pitches, yet another characteristic of Inupiaq singing that reflects the sounds of nature. This characteristic is more
prevalent in some dance groups than others, and is demonstrated by Oviuk when he sings in the radio-documentary (Sallee 2016, 4:21-5:03).

In a search for musicological discussion of the quality of sound in Inupiaq singing, there are occasional references to a nasal sound, but most are brief, giving way to consideration of the drum timbre or rhythmical elements. Musicologist Lorraine Koranda takes note of the nasal quality in an early article titled “Music of the Alaskan Eskimo:”

Tone quality is an important element in Eskimo musical performances. When a vocal group accompanies a public dance presentation, the tone may best be described as harsh, strident, and nasal. But one hears among the individual singers who have recorded for this project a veritable kaleidoscope of range and quality. This subject demands, as do many other aspects of Eskimo musical practice, further study. (Koranda 1966b, 90)

Here, Koranda suggests further study on the topic of vocal tone, which she describes as “harsh, strident, and nasal.” As a composer, pianist, and vocalist, Koranda moved to Fairbanks to lead the university choir and chair the music department at the University of Alaska in the late 1940s, and subsequently became interested in recording and studying the music of Alaska Native peoples (Summerville 2014, 9). From her perspective, the singing Koranda heard in Alaska Native villages may have seemed strident, as compared with the Euro-American classically trained voice. The “veritable kaleidoscope of range and quality” she writes of refers to the fact that during the course of her recording project, she toured and sampled the music in the villages of Hooper Bay, Chevak, St. Michael, Unalakleet, King Island, Mary’s Igloo, Wales, Diomede Island, St. Lawrence Island, Kotzebue, Point Hope, Kobuk,
Wainwright, Utqiagvik (Barrow), Anaktuvuk Pass, and Colville River, encompassing both Yup’ik and Inupiaq cultural styles, without any differentiation between cultural groups in her generalized statements regarding tone. In the liner notes to her audio recording *Alaskan Eskimo Songs and Stories*, Koranda states that ethnomusicologist Alan Lomax and anthropologist Conrad Arensberg carried out an analysis of her audio materials using their *Cantometrics* system, and determined the nasality and raspiness of the vocal quality to be “great to extreme” (Koranda 1972, 1, fn 1). Koranda also notes that “individual voices may be sweet and resonant, but in public performance a ‘piercing’ tone quality is preferred” (Koranda 1972, 1). This statement confirms a deliberate vocal style that is used for singing rather than everyday speaking.

Ethnomusicologist Thomas Johnston joined the University of Alaska Fairbanks in the early 1970s, bringing his experience and education from Witwatersrand University in Johannesburg, South Africa (T. F. Johnston 1981, 18). His early take on the sound of Inupiaq song is that it is distinct, yet he also describes it as having a “nasal” quality:

A preliminary analysis of the sound of Eskimo music shows that it is quite distinct from American Indian music and from most other musics around the world…Vocal tone quality is slightly nasal, and there is a custom of creating a pulsation upon a long-held note. This has been termed glottal pulsation, but it is partly diaphragmatic. (T. F. Johnston 1974, 21)

Here, instead of developing the idea of “glottal pulsation,” Johnston leads directly into a discussion of cross-rhythms between the song texts and the drum, highlighting rhythmical elements. Later, in 1976, Johnston states that “[b]oth men and women use
considerable throat restriction…Glottal pulsation yields a strong physical sensation in the resonating cavities of the head, which extends the variety and areal range of other forms of tactile rhythmic reinforcement, such as dancing and drumming” (T. F. Johnston 1976b, 9). Here, Johnston yields to the method of achieving their distinct sound, through the use of restriction in the throat. In a later article, he calls the singing tone “nasal, shrill, and strident,” surmising that “…[i]t contrasts with the deep resonance of the drums and probably enables the song words to be more clearly heard” (T. F. Johnston 1980, 370). While it is true that the singers using a “shrill” tone quality can be better heard over the unpitched drums, Johnston does not discuss the sound quality from an informant’s point of view, rather he uses his own analysis. Being much more interested in the social and economic aspects of Inupiaq music, Johnston gives little discussion about the sound quality of the singing throughout much of his entire body of work.

In her dissertation viewed through the lens of education and curriculum development at the University of California, Los Angeles (Binnington 1973), Doreen Binnington writes about Inupiaq music and dance in Utqiagvik (Barrow), Alaska. In her analysis of transcribed dance songs, she notes that the women’s singing tone has a particular sound quality: “The ‘shrill’ timbre of the women’s voices gradually becomes evident, and becomes very prominent in part two. The placement of the women’s voices is usually high, due to greater restriction in the throat” (Binnington 1973, 219). Here Binnington notes the method of creating the quality of sound, which she describes as “shrill,” by using “greater restriction in the throat.” Binnington does
not develop the idea other than to mention the quality of women’s singing voices throughout her work, as her main purpose was to develop educational curriculum for teachers.

Given that musicologists Koranda and Johnston and education specialist Binnington all take note of the particular quality of tone in Inupiaq singing, that it is distinct from other Native American musics and deserves further study, it is interesting that none decided to devote more attention to this detail. Other ethnomusicologists have devoted extensive studies to vocal sound production in other parts of the world, where compression of air is used to gain differing timbres in singing. For instance, Ken-Ichi Sakakibara et al. describe Asian traditional pressed-type singing, such as Japanese Min-yoh, using block diagrams detailing speed and amplitude of laryngeal airflow, combined with qualities of openness and closing the throat (K.-I. Sakakibara et al. 2003). Sven Grawunder presents the results of his vocology studies from southern Siberian throat singing and overtone singing in his dissertation, where he examines the production of a variety of types of throat singing (Grawunder 2005). While these works consider in detail how the singers produce the sounds they make with their voices, Oviuk’s description of how he learned to sing through the nose in order to relate to the marine mammals that Inupiaq peoples are so intertwined with provides a very direct explanation about why he sings the way he does from the performer’s perspective. A survey of works written by Native authors of the Seward Peninsula (J. E. Senungetuk 1982; Green 1959; Oquilluk 1973; Pinson 2004) reveals no mention of the quality of sound of the singing. To me, this indicates
that the sound quality is considered normal to the singers who practice it or to the authors who are regularly acclimated to listening to this style of singing, and thus requires no special mention. It is for the outsiders to be concerned with such details.

2.4.3 Sounds of Singing—Pitch

An element of singing style that took my colonized ear by surprise when I first started practicing with the group was the idea of singing “together,” in terms of pitch. In my experience as a violinist studying Euro-American ideals of music, matching one’s own pitch output to the others in a group is a serious undertaking. In order to learn perfect intonation, violin students of my generation often depended on practicing with electronic tuning devices that show when a pitch is sharp or flat by a microtone, directing correction to pitch accuracy by Euro-American standards. Inupiaq singers seem not to be so concerned. Inupiaq singers may follow the general contour of the song, matching intervalllic skips for the most part, or not. Some, or most, singers match the lead singer’s strong voice, while several individuals might sing within their own tonalities, while still following the general shape of the song. No one seems to mind that someone might be what one calls in Euro-American music conservatory “out of tune” or “off key,” but they do mind if someone does not participate in Inupiaq singing, or participates with a negative attitude. I have been at practice sessions when seemingly every person is singing in a different tonality. A few people, especially those of the middling generation, might look around in
expectation for some sort of discouraging words from elders, but usually it is shrugged off in seconds with a bit of laughter.

I find this attitude toward pitch present not only in the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage, but in many other Indigenous dance groups performing throughout Alaska. Some groups sing with more cohesiveness than others, but this casual attitude toward pitch seems to be a characteristic that is widely accepted. I heard from one leader of a village dance group that is known for exceptionally clear and uniform singing that at one time they invited a school music teacher to help them focus their singing, by using scales as ear-training tools. Except for references to Inupiaq music being sung in “unison” (T. F. Johnston 1988, 78, 1980, 370; Koranda 1972, 1; Ikuta 2010, 77), there are scant acknowledgements in ethnomusicological literature of this phenomenon of unintentional multi-tonal singing in regards to Inupiaq music. Koranda mentions, “[t]here is a tendency for the unaccompanied singer to sing ‘out of tune.’ These departures from ‘fixed pitch’ are rather obvious to the listener, and no special comment on them was considered essential to this study” (Koranda 1972, Preface). Koranda took the time to briefly point out that they sound “out of tune” to her ear, but perhaps is avoiding a discussion of her own preference to a fixed pitch system. I think that the issue of pitch matching is simply a characteristic that is not so strongly valued here, rather than a criterion for exclusivity. Binnington mentions that “male and female voices are separated by an octave, but it should be noted that most of the time there is a slight compression or stretching” (Binnington 1973, 220). What I hear in the present is more than a slight compression or stretching
of the octave, but adds up to complete acceptance of group members who give their personal best effort at singing with intention and spirit rather than rapt attention to pitch accuracy. At this point in my experience of practicing with the group, I hear multiple tonal centers as a richness in the overall texture of the vocal sound, rather than an impurity. There are more sounds to hear rather than less, and one can hear individual voices contributing to an overall musical fabric, one representing an egalitarian society where all voices are important.

2.4.4 Sounds of Singing—Vocables

Many of the songs that the Kingikmiut Singers and Dancers of Anchorage sing are presented using vocables—syllables that seemingly have no linguistic meanings, especially on the first rendition of the song. Some songs use syllables such as “aye-yah-hah—aye-ya” or “angh-ah-ha,” and may have structural meaning for the singing of the song melody. Most of the group members sing along with the parts of the songs that use vocables. If a song has text that is known, at least to the leader, the leader (or leaders) sings the song text in Inupiaq, which may be a few words or more in the entire song. At that point, many voices of the Anchorage group may drop out, as they may not yet have learned the Inupiaq words. They rejoin singing when vocables fill in the melody.  

I have heard people refer to Inupiaq singing in general

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21 There has been talk among group members about projecting the song texts up on the wall or a screen at practice sessions so that people can see representations of the words instead of relying solely on aural/oral traditions, but no one has taken the initiative to organize the project. Many members of the group may be monolingual English speakers and Inupiaq language learners, as am I. Many people in my generation grew up in Anchorage or Fairbanks, without a community to practice our language as children. I have since joined a newly created Inupiaq language vitalization group in Anchorage,
by some form of the vocable sounds, such as “Ayanga-yah” (as a noun) rather than using the Inupiaq word “atuq,” meaning “to sing” (MacLean 2014, 58). The sounds of the vocables permeate the sounds of singing for much of the practice session.

Thomas Johnston addresses the use of vocables in Inupiaq songs in several articles (T. F. Johnston 1976c, 12; T. F. Johnston et al. 1979, 6–7; T. F. Johnston 1991, 62). He states: “Common throughout Alaska is the use of vocables. These cannot properly be referred to as nonsense syllables, for not only do they serve as a mnemonic device (aiding the recall of melody and of dance movements), but in some cases they are abbreviations of real words” (T. F. Johnston 1976a, 126). The vocables that the Kingikmiut singers use are not random syllables; rather the different syllables are performed in the same way in a song each time, and passed on through oral tradition in group practice sessions. Johnston also suggests vocables are used as animal imitations or mnemonic devices to recall melody, rhythm and dance motions (T. F. Johnston 1976b, 22). Perhaps they are remnants of archaic songs, as suggested by ethnomusicologist Charlotte Frisbie (Frisbie 1980, 363). Koranda concurs, stating, “[t]his is probably because the songs have been passed along orally over a long period of time. Words or phrases have been forgotten. In some instances the language is archaic or distorted and cannot be translated” (Koranda 1972, 1). Even though the song texts have disappeared from some of the songs, the meanings are often retained in the mimetic dance motions, which will be discussed later.

attended by young adults, children, and elders from many Inupiaq communities who are committed to bringing Inupiaq languages back into our lives.
Linguist Leanne Hinton suggests the use of vocables in song as a tool for negotiating agreement in close community relations. In her study of Havasupai songs, Hinton writes:

“[G]roup solidarity necessarily involves suspension of disagreement. By having little or no informational content in a song, it becomes easier for the listeners to suspend the rational faculties that can produce disagreement and thus hinder unified action and solidarity. It is therefore reasonable that vocable-rich songs be used in a ceremony that expresses this solidarity.” (Hinton 1980, 295)

Hinton suggests that vocables are a tool by which people can agree. Hinton’s assessment of the usage of vocables by Havasupai is an idea that resonates with Inupiaq values of avoiding conflict.\(^{22}\) I have also heard that vocables may have been used as a way of avoiding conflicts with colonial powers, such as school officials or religious organizations. Using meaningless syllables in traditional songs would sanitize the songs a little, making them more palatable to outsiders who held new forms of power in small communities, especially in regards to policies regarding English-only rules devised by American school administrations. In this way, changing the words to vocables would allow for the singing of songs, while meanings were retained in the dance motions or the song melodies themselves. Over generations, the song texts have been forgotten, and the vocables took their place. This idea as applied to Inupiaq songs is merely conjecture however, because of the typical use of vocables in the first verse of a song, followed by strong song texts on the repeat, as demonstrated throughout so many Inupiaq dance groups in Alaska, especially by

\(^{22}\) Charles Sean Asiqluq Topkok’s dissertation “Iñupiat Iliqquiat: Inner Views of Our Iñupiaq Values” (C. S. A. Topkok 2015) discusses Inupiaq values, with special consideration to the idea of avoiding conflicts in Chapter 5.
dance groups that never lost their traditions. Perhaps the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage will vitalize their language through the development of song texts over the next generation of participants.

2.4.5 Sounds of Drumming

The sound of the Inupiaq drums fills any space quickly. At the practice sessions of the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage, there are usually six to twelve men and boys who regularly attend and participate as drummers, while at times there are fewer, or sometimes even more drummers, depending on the attendance of regular members or the addition of people attending as guests. The drummers usually try out the stiffness of their drumhead with a tap or two of the drum stick on the back of the wooden rim of the drum. If a drum’s tension is too tight, the drummer sprinkles or sprays water from a bottle on the front of the drumhead, and spreads it around with the palm of a hand. This act of giving the drum a drink of fresh water is reminiscent of giving a drink to the spirit of an animal that had just been harvested on a hunt. Immediately the drum begins to give more sound on the next tap with the drumstick. During this warm-up period that may be very brief or may last some time before the leader is ready to begin, there is a slight hubbub of drum taps while the drummers try out their drums for the correct tension. Then the drum leader gets the idea for a song in his head, taps the rhythm of the song with the tip of his drum stick on the outer rim for a few beats, and then starts to sing. The first time through a song, the drummers lightly tap the rhythm on the outer edges of their
drums, in unison with the leader. On the repeat of the song, the drummers use a combination of light taps and stronger, full-on strikes to one or both edges of the drum with the full length of the drumstick, finding the most resonant sound the drum can make. At times, the strongest drum hits made in unison by several drummers drown out the sound of the singing altogether. Sometimes the composer of the song may have created an alternating tap-beat, tap-beat, or tap-tap-beat pattern to accompany the song, allowing certain words or pitches of the song to be heard through the lighter rim taps. There are also songs that build in excitement, and by the end, the sound of the drums is the only part that is heard.

On occasion I have had a chance to pick up a drum and join in with the men. As I have been singing with the group for a few years, I know the songs, and know how the drum rhythms fit in with the songs, but beating the drum with some accuracy seemed like a different matter altogether for an unpracticed novice. I found I had to put my orchestral violin skills to work, and closely watch the leader in order to be exactly with him. I played the drum stick like I play the violin bow, reacting to the slightest movement of the leader, and moving with him as best I could. It is shameful to play a drum beat out of sync with the rest of the group, and one tries to avoid playing solo in the “wrong” place. The drummers jokingly call a misplaced drum beat “popcorn,” because it sounds a little like the cooking of popcorn when several people make mistaken beats at the same time. The drum is heavier than I expected, and requires a fair amount of strength to hold up the drum and keep the drum stick in motion. The biggest surprise to me was the amount of sound of the drum produces as
it vibrates in front of one’s face, combined with the sound of one’s own singing voice directed right at the center of the drum head, which echoes back towards one’s own ears. I remember hearing my father talk about how that combination of vibrations of the drum and one’s voice could send you to a place that is out of this world, if one spent enough time practicing—a spiritual place, or a musical high, from all the vibrations felt through the drum handle and drum stick, and the echoing mixture of sounds of the voice and the drum.

In his article “Drum Rhythms of the Alaskan Eskimo,” Johnston describes the sound of the Inupiaq drums. “Among the Inupiaq, this light clicking of one rim is all that is heard during the first time through for a dance song. For the second time through, the loud, resonant beating of both rims is employed” (T. F. Johnston 1988, 79). When a drummer strikes both rims, sometimes the middle portion of the drum stick comes in contact with the drumhead, but it is not necessarily intended, as that contact can lead to breakage of the drumhead. With stronger force applied with the drumstick, the drumhead simply resonates more. “The striking of the two rims produces a rich resonating tone; this tone is deep and sustained, but the drums are not intentionally matched to any pitch or to each other” (T. F. Johnston 1988, 76). The unpitched drums resonate with the impact of the drum stick on the rims, but also with the vibrations of the voice of the player, who also sings. Johnston also notices that “[b]etween songs, drummers frequently keep tapping away at the drum rim, as if to retain the emotional momentum gained” (T. F. Johnston 1976b, 15). The drum taps
are often constant throughout a practice session, and can have a feeling of playfulness or release, especially after a particularly intense song or an intense performance.

2.4.6 Sounds of Drums—Drum Making

Traditional drums were made with walrus stomach lining wrapped tightly around a bentwood frame with a handle made of wood, walrus ivory, antler, or bone. Anchorage Kingikmiut often use drumheads made with nylon fabric or goatskin, which is much more affordable than walrus stomach lining, less likely to break, and more easily replaceable in case of breakage. The drum frames are round or slightly oval hoops about 23 inches in diameter and an inch and a half deep. The slender drum sticks are a little bit longer, as the drummers hit the underside of the drum’s far rim with the tip of the stick. When the intensity increases, the players use more force on the stick, hitting both the far rim and the near rim, and sometimes the underside of the drumhead itself. On occasion, the tip of a drum stick may break off due to overuse.

Joe Senungetuk describes the drum in his memoir:

The drum is made of carefully chosen driftwood, usually a rare cottonwood or ash. A walrus-stomach lining is stretched over this frame. The wood is shaped, or rather adapted, to the final form, to take the punishment of the two or three types of stresses incurred in stretching the resonant walrus membrane, as well as the hitting and hammering of the drumstick. The wood is shaped, however, to only about a quarter-inch thickness and a couple inches in width. The drumstick is also shaped to conform to the individual shape of the drum and the player’s hand. In earlier days, the handle of the drum was made of various substances, from ivory to whalebone, and its shape was carved into ornate and subtle animal forms. (J. E. Senungetuk 1982, 45–46).
Some drummers in the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage who take ownership of their own drums have drums with specially made handles made of walrus ivory or animal bone that is carved into animal forms such as a polar bear or a bowhead whale. Some drumheads are decorated with iconic designs drawn directly on the face of the drumhead. The drum leader keeps a bag of drum sticks for the group that are usually made with bamboo. The drummers cover the bamboo drumsticks with black electrical tape in an effort to protect them from breakage through constant use. I have seen a few drum sticks made using baleen from a bowhead whale, or made with wood from an axe handle (carved down to slender proportions), or made from synthetic materials such as plastic reflective driveway markers (with the reflective tip cut off). Inupiat are practical and inventive people.

Sylvester Ayek, Ugiuvangmiut Inupiaq born on King Island, an island about forty miles south of Wales, provides information about making Inupiaq drums in an Inupiaq language workshop held at the Smithsonian Arctic Studies Center at the Anchorage Museum in 2011. He speaks in his Ugiuvangmiut King Island dialect of Inupiaq (translated in parentheses) and in English:

**Sylvester Ayek:** *Ikkiuruq uuma timiŋa sauyam, tıpsriniaqlutik ipkuq, qiruktamaamik.*
(The body of the drum is from driftwood they would search for this driftwood when they went out collecting firewood.)

*Ikkimik iwaqlalutik, sauyuŋatut. Kinisalugu ’aa piŋilu.*
(They made drums with this driftwood that they looked for. Then they would soak it to bend it.)

*Izipluu, aigvum aŋiaŋuani. Taamna kaŋiani, qiliqtaq saasrkaqpiyaat.*
(They stretched walrus stomach. This one on the end, with the tied ends, they call it a *saasrkaq* [cup].)
Taamna ‘aa ivua, paphumik. Aasin ‘aa mumimik mumilalutik, sauyautiriaigaat taamna mumiq.
(Then the handle is called a papłu. And then, the mumiq [drum stick], they play the drum with the mumiq.)
…We tried all kinds of membrane, you know. They don’t sound the same. We like to use walrus stomachs. It’s lots of work and expensive, but we prefer that.
Herbert Foster, Sr.: The tune of this one, they use it so much in one piece, like from walrus, and it’s got one tune.
Sylvester Ayek: And the walrus stomachs, they can last for two years or three years, if you take care of them. And when we are using them, we don’t use them dry. We wet it with untreated water, or spring water. In the city we use filtered water, we don’t use tap water.
Ağıąğuq taamna, aivguum ağıągua igiaqluu.
(The walrus stomach is stretched over the frame.)
Silataani ittuamik, paqnaiguraqtuamik iziraigaat.
(They used the outer part of the membrane, which is the stronger part, for the drum skin.)
Maatnami allanik atuqsaaluğaatugut izisranik naguağizuitkaut.
(These days we try to use other materials for the drum membrane, but we don’t like them.)
Utiqpagzinaatugut ağiųvum ağıąguanik sawinaavaŋa.
(We return to using walrus stomach even though they are a lot work.)
(Arctic Studies Center 2014, 2:30--5:00)

Ayek expresses his disdain for synthetic drumhead materials, but concedes that it is expensive and difficult to obtain and maintain walrus stomach lining drumheads, especially in urban areas. They prefer the sound produced by the drumhead made with walrus stomach lining over synthetic materials, and go to great lengths to continue the tradition of using them. When he does have the advantage of the traditional drumheads, he explains that they are very particular in the way they care of them, even as to the type of water they use, in order that they last for a few years. The King Island Dancers are among the few dance groups that insist on using traditional drumhead materials when they can.
2.4.7 Acoustemology

The soundscape of the practice sessions of the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage, including ongoing chatter among participants and children, the sounds of singing, and the sounds of the drums, reflect an Inupiaq acoustemology. The chatter among participants shows a sense of egalitarianism present in the group, where all members are welcome to take part as they like. Sometimes, the chatter includes private discussions between elders and younger members, which may be guidance about dance motions or song meanings. When I first started practicing with the group, I sat and watched and listened for months, trying to take it in. Sometimes an elder would tell me about the dance motions and what they mean. I started to ask questions only after I gained some courage. Now that I have learned several dances and songs and I actively participate in practices and public performances, I often see the same process in newer members to the group as they adapt to the ways of the Kingikmiut practice sessions. The sounds of the singing reflect ancient relationships with sea mammals, brought to the qazgi by hunters who listened to the calls of seals, whales, and walrus in the sea. The group is not exclusive in terms of individual singing style, yet is accepting as long as one is willing to give in positive energy, intention, and spirit. The drum, traditionally made of sea mammal membranes, driftwood, and ivory or animal bone, provides yet another reflection of the natural environment of the ancestors. By bringing these traditions to the urban area, Inupiaq practice their worldview within an Americanized city on a regular basis.
2.5 Aġġi: Dance

At the practice sessions of the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage, music and dance are hardly ever separate. They exist together, unless there is group discussion about the finer points of song words or dance motions; in which case, isolation of song or dance occurs in practice. The Inupiaq word aġġi means “to hold an Inupiaq dance” (MacLean 2014, 12), encompassing the singing, drumming, and the dancing as a single concept, much as the word tango can refer to the music or the dance, or both together (“Tango, n.1” 2016). Ethnomusicologist Thomas Johnston points out that “[t]he dance is the main vehicle for Eskimo music, and the main justification for its existence” (T. F. Johnston 1974, 19). Social anthropologist Hiroko Ikuta points out in her dissertation that in Inupiaq dance performance, “there is no ‘dancer’ whose role in a dance-event is dedicated to dancing only” (Ikuta 2010, 78); rather, Inupiaq dancers participate equally as singers, drummers, dancers, and audience members. Recognizing Indigenous points of view from around the world regarding the ideas of dance and music as a single entity, dance ethnologist Adrienne Kaeppler points out that the word “‘dance’ is a Western term and concept (just as is the term ‘music’)” (Kaeppler 2000, 117). However, Anchorage Kingikmiut have adopted the word dance and use it regularly in conversation, such as to describe “I’m going to dance practice,” or, more often from elders, simply, “I’m going dance.” Occasionally, practice sessions start with singing and drumming for a few minutes, while dancers are busy talking among themselves, but after a short while, participants usually get interested and quickly start dancing, either with improvisational moves for
participating in “invitational” dances or with choreographed moves for fixed motion dances.

2.5.1 Invitational Dances

Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage start each practice session with a series of “invitational” dances. Invitational dances are a chance for people to move their bodies to the beat without having to concentrate on specific choreographed dance motions. The improvisatory dance motions exist within a structured system, however (Kaeppler 2000, 117). The structured system is based on gender roles. Women stand with their feet together and bend and bounce to the beat at the knees. Simultaneously, they wave one hand at a time back and forth, in front of their faces and out to the sides, with the palm facing outward. Usually the dancer waves one hand back and forth for two to three beats before switching to the other hand. The less dominant hand points downward toward the floor, hanging from a bent elbow, while the other hand waves outward. When instruction is given, the advice to women and girls is to appear to be graceful in improvisational dance motions, as you never know when a potential admirer might be observing you while you dance, and you always want to look your best.

Thomas Johnston discusses women’s invitational dance motions in his article “Context, Meaning and Function in Inupiaq Dance” (1990). Here, he describes women’s invitational dance motions based on his observations done in the 1970s of Point Hope dancers David Frankson, Ernie Frankson, and Dinah Frankson. He
introduces terminology he learned from them, including the word *atuutipiaq* for “invitational” style dancing, and *sitquqsraqtuq* meaning “bending one’s knees”:

Typical *atuutipiaq* women’s dance motions include gracefully waving both open palms to the right side, left palm facing the right of the chest, right palm facing the audience, then performing the same motion to the left, mirror-image…The most distinctive feature of women’s *atuutipiaq* dance movements is the flexing of the knees. With the soles of both feet planted close together on the ground, the knees bend rhythmically in a motion known as *sitquqsraqtuq*, resulting in an undulating rise and fall of the entire body, as a boat on the open sea. (T. F. Johnston 1990, 237–38)

The elder women of the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage hold their less-active hand further down toward the floor and off to the side than Johnston describes, and the younger women follow their lead. Johnston’s image of the boat bobbing on the waves of the ocean provides an elegant image for a newcomer to the practice.

For invitational dances, men dance with more vigor than women and often appear to be showing off some muscles in their arms and chests as they wave fists or outstretched hands or point their elbows in the air. They dance with their feet spread wide on the floor, knees bent, buttocks sticking out, and stomping one foot or two to the beat of the drum for emphasis. Men also let out short shouts, such as “*Uu-ii! Uu-ii!*” Anthropologist Anne-Marie Victor-Howe suggests this type of shout is meant to resemble animal cries (Victor-Howe 1994, 178), and I suggest it is meant to attract attention. Sometimes it is hard to tell whether the men are showing off for the women or for the other men in attendance, as a positioning dance.
Thomas Johnston discusses the criteria for a “good Eskimo dancer” in his article “Alaskan Eskimo Dance in Cultural Context” (1975). Here he brings in a historical comment made by the English naval explorer and geographer Frederick William Beechey to illustrate his point about the athleticism of the style of male dancers:

Male dancers are expected to assume virile, angular postures. One of the first scientific voyagers to the area, Captain F. W. Beechey, described Alaskan Eskimo dancing as "better becoming a pugilist than a performer" (1832:395). A functional explanation of this may be seen in the athletic behavior traditionally common at times of interpersonal confrontation. (T. F. Johnston 1975, 4)

While the men of the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage have a more pronounced athletic style than do the women, at home practice sessions they are much more relaxed in their style than male dancers of other Inupiaq dance groups from other parts of the state. Perhaps these men portray a sense of self-assuredness in having regular employment in an urban setting, at a desk job, or an urban blue-collar job, where they are focused less on the physical work of subsistence hunting for whales and walrus, as many people do in village settings.

The Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage usually practices one or more invitational dances at the beginning of a practice session, and one or more at the end of the session. This custom allows men and women to share improvised movement to the beat of the drums. However, in many practice sessions in recent times, the men often stick to the drumming and singing while the women dominate the dance floor during invitational dances. Currently the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage practice five songs that are considered invitationals: “Pualahli,”
“Ya-ka-ka-roona,” “All Alaska,” “Akalah,” and “Whaling,” a song from Point Hope. Occasionally, if a song leader learns a new song, he sings it for the group and presents it as an invitational dance, until more participants learn to sing the song, at which point he can teach the accompanying choreographed motions. The typical beat pattern of popular invitational songs is usually fairly steady and predictable, so dancers can expect a regular beat upon which to improvise their movements. Each song lasts perhaps a minute or at most two, and may be repeated two or three times.

Some of the purposes of the invitational dances are to warm up the body, to get out of one’s chair, to elevate the mind from the day’s work and worries, but also to demonstrate one’s willingness to be part of the group. I’ve heard that the invitational dance allows people to share space with others, to communicate their state of spiritual well-being, or to uplift one’s state of mind, and in doing so, allows others to witness one’s character. I have attended practice sessions when no one gets up to dance the first invitational dance, and the elder women immediately start to scold the younger participants to “get up, dance!” It is most important that everyone participates in some fashion. The elders realize that everyone, even newcomers, can participate in the invitational dances without much instruction, without rehearsals, and without studying the intricate dance motions that go with particular choreographed motion dances. The result of this communal activity is acceptance of each other as parts of the whole group. Elders, children, middle-aged dancers engage equally, taking up space to move to the beat of the drums. This egalitarian space does not give privileged space to young, stereotypically attractive people at their physical
prime; rather, its members value input from everyone who participates. Johnston notes that “One of the major differences between atuutipiaq and sayuun (motion dances) is that, in the former, men and women appear to be executing the dance solely for themselves, and make a point of revolving this way and that, even if the back becomes turned to the audience” (T. F. Johnston 1990, 238). Johnston sees the invitational dance as an individual activity, as the dancers do not coordinate their moves together the way they do in choreographed motion dances. While it may be true that participants are free to improvise their own movements within a structured system, as a non-participant, Johnston may not have understood the importance of participating in invitational dances as a way of committing one’s allegiance to the group (cf. Victor-Howe 1994, 177), and sharing their emotional states together for a moment. Like sharing each other’s company at a meal, sharing improvisational dance is a social activity that communicates a positive state of mind and readiness to be Inupiaq, a “real person.”

2.5.2 Motion Dances

Choreographed fixed-motion dances make up the largest portion of dances that the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage practice. Currently they practice about forty motion dances, each with associated specific meanings or stories. In the case of the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage, dance motions often contain the meanings of the song text, if song texts are even known at this point, as some may be forgotten over time. There are dances that are usually performed by
men ("Chopping Wood" and "Reindeer Hunter"), or by women ("Ahluighaneak," also known as "Picking Sourdocks," and "Lady Dance"), and dances often performed by children ("Aya-aya" and "Igloo Builder"), or dances generally performed by all ("Polar Bear" and "Agheanamiut"). There are dances that are performed by families, usually descendants of the composer ("Seal Hunter" and "Inuaghluum attutah"). There are dances that are specific to certain villages, such as Kingigin ("Inuaghluum soyatuun"), and there are common dances that are shared between dance groups throughout Alaska and even with groups in Russia and Canada ("Bering Land Bridge" and "Uncle Sam"). There are dances that tell stories or histories ("Lady Dance"), there are dances that are written as "song duels" by "teasing cousins" ("Utenaghook") (cf. D. P. Kingston 2009), and there are dances that describe essences or qualities, such as friendship ("Friendship Dance"). There are dances that depict work, such as hunting ("Reindeer Hunter"), gathering ("Sourdocks"), chopping wood, tanning skins, or building an igloo. There are dances that conjure spirits of animals or birds, such as reindeer, walrus, polar bear, or raven. Some dances are so old that participants have forgotten the origins, while some dances are newly composed and reflect activities of the current time ("Chopping Wood," "Float Coat").

In her article "Dances and Dancing in Tonga" (2006), anthropologist Adrienne Kaeppler discusses the idea of dance as a form of conveying history. Rather than solely relying on the Euro-American idea of written history, Kaeppler asks, "how can bodies converse and convey history?" (Kaeppler 2006, 26). Kaeppler examines the content of Tongan dances and compares them to historical documents
written from European perspectives. In the case of Kingikmiut, there are dances that portray moments in time, such as the song called “Lady Dance,” or sometimes referred to as “Red Light District.” The song was composed by Komonaseak, a Kingikmiut who visited Nome during the gold rush era of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Performed by women, the dance movements depict an event Komonaseak witnessed on Front Street in Nome over a century ago. The dancers hold up both hands in front of their faces, as if looking in a mirror. Then their hands draw the outline of the length of the long dresses that were in style at the time, at least among the female newcomers to the region. The dancers’ hands depict walking, and the oral history that we hear describing the song is that the woman Komonaseak was watching was trying to walk across the muddy street in Nome. The woman had to lift up her skirt to avoid getting dirty, which the dancers portray by grabbing imaginary long skirts on the right side, then the left. The dancers portray the woman attending to her earrings that sway back and forth, first on the right side and then on the left. The story that is depicted is that the lady saw a man and beckoned to him with a wave to come over, but when he arrived, he was not appealing, so she shooed him away, making a face showing her disgust. The last pose is usually accompanied with much laughter, as female dancers usually want to appear their best; but in this case, they are willing to put on their most appalling facial expression in order to portray a woman of the night who shows her dislike of a gold miner.

Komonaseak’s dance is like a snapshot of a moment in time that he witnessed during the gold rush days of Nome. For an Inupiaq, witnessing the previously quiet
beach on Cape Nome drew 3,000 gold seekers in 1899, which grew to a population of 20,000 by the following summer of 1900, must have been astounding (Naske and Slotnick 1979, 73). The tent city grew not only with miners, but also entrepreneurs and others seeking to make their fortunes by providing services for the miners. A lawless situation quickly developed on the frontier, full of claim jumpers, shootouts, and muggings. In their book *Alaska: A History of the 49th State* (1979), historians Claus Naske and Herman Slotnick describe the scene: “In 1900 the town was filled with pimps, prostitutes, con men, and gamblers; it had fifty saloons, and that figure soon doubled” (Naske and Slotnick 1979, 74). Komonaseak’s portrayal of the woman concerned with her appearance, her attempts at attracting a man, and chasing him away, certainly resonate with historical accounts regarding the era. Komonaseak’s dance composition is his ethnography of the time, presenting his impressions of strangers on the Front Street of Nome during the gold rush. For a culture that traditionally has had no written language, dance was a way of embodying historical moments, telling a story that is passed from generation to generation through dance motions and song. This particular moment is still being performed over a hundred years after it was created shows that dance as ethnography is still active and a valid form of oral history.

In general, the fact that Inupiaq music does not exist without the dance shows their interdependence, but also the conception of the two activities as a single entity. This holistic epistemology is symbolic of an Inupiaq worldview. Yup’ik scholar Angayuqaq Oscar Kawagley takes note that all Alaska Native cultures share this
characteristic epistemology: “Alaska Native worldviews are oriented toward the synthesis of information gathered from interaction with the natural and spiritual worlds so as to accommodate and live in harmony with the natural and spiritual principles and exhibit the values of sharing, cooperation, and respect” (Kawagley 1995, 11). The idea of synthesizing dance and musical arts as a regular part of practice sessions is representative of a way of life, rather than separating the two arts. As a child, I enrolled in ballet lessons and dutifully attended practice sessions every Saturday morning, and participated in the local performance of *The Nutcracker*. I simultaneously enrolled in violin lessons and participated in the youth orchestra on Monday evenings. The two activities of music and dance never crossed paths, and I understood them to be separate endeavors. Just as the Euro-American concept is to divide the arts into separate topics of study, an Inupiaq view is more holistic in that the activities are not separated, but practiced together as a whole.

2.6 *Iḷisaġvik*: Place of Learning, Creating

Traditional *qazgit* were *iḷisaġvit,*

Kingikmiut elder Robert Mayokok writes about the intersecting activities of the *qazgi* in his memoir *Eskimo Customs* (1959):

The main school for a boy takes place in a large driftwood and sod house called Kosge. Kosge is the community house in large Eskimo villages. It is also a workshop where sleds, skinboat frames, harpoons, spears, bows and arrows, and lances are made. Boys are encouraged to watch the workmen and learn to make their own hunting implements. As the work goes on, stories are told of how to hunt various Arctic

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23 *Iḷisaġvik* (singular), *iḷisaġvit* (plural).
animals...The Kosge is also used as a dance hall. Dancing takes place when the weather is not favorable for hunting, or when celebrating occasions such as when someone catches oogrook or polar bear. Both men and women dance. (Mayokok 1959, 9)

Mayokok draws attention to the ways that young boys and men learned through observing their elders as they went about their work, concurrent with storytelling. Observation was the main method of teaching the next generation about every detail, and children became adept at learning by watching and listening, and trying to imitate successful adults in their every move.

Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage continue this method of transmission of knowledge at their weekly practice sessions. Without much verbal instruction, knowledgeable dancers, drummers, and singers lead the way by modeling songs and dances every week. The least experienced male participants are given a drum and asked to sit at the end of the drum line and follow along, and try to stay in unison with the other drummers, without making too many extra drum taps. Drummers learn to follow along through numerous repetitions of songs over many practice sessions. After they learn to drum in unison with the group, they might be encouraged to try dance motions by following an expert male dancer on certain songs. Less experienced female participants observe, listen, and as time goes by, sometimes follow along with the hand motions from their seats, and sometimes join in the singing, until they have enough courage to stand up and join in the dance action in the middle of the room or sing out loud with the rest of the group. Sometimes elder women tell less experienced individuals about the dance motions, especially if they are newcomers to the group or are direct relatives. But the instruction is not universal,
and not always consistent. At times, elders will be very generous with their advice, and at other times, more reserved. Many times I have tried asking direct questions, and have been met with less than direct answers. I have come to understand that the expectation is that I watch and learn in the traditional way.

2.6.1 Learning

In an essay about traditional education, Inupiaq University of Alaska Anchorage professor Paul Ongtooguk points out that apprenticeship is an important aspect of the transmission of knowledge (Ongtooguk 2011, 98). Ongtooguk uses the example of a young person learning the skills for becoming a successful hunter from an uncle or other knowledgeable role model through apprenticeship, by following the lead of an elder and taking an active role in participation to gain experience and confidence. Kingikmiut use this method in dance practices to bring up new leaders. For instance, in a typical dance practice, experienced lead drummers seated Sean, a young man, in between two of the best singers and drummers to teach him how to become a song leader. Among the men, it is usual for the leaders to sit in the middle of the row of seats, and the least experienced drummers and singers sit toward either end of the line. On occasion, the lead singers will let a young apprentice sit in the center and drum and sing along as usual for several songs. At a certain point, especially if there is a request to repeat the song in a practice session, they may ask the apprentice to start the singing and drumming by himself. Even if it was his first time leading the group, in the safety of a practice session, he can test his abilities to
lead. The other leaders provide scaffolding by leading the song the first time through, to get the sound of the song in the young man’s head. In this instance, the scaffolding and practice of leading a song opening proved successful for Sean. Over time, he will be allowed to lead more songs in practice sessions, and as needed, in public performances.

A less public process of transmission of knowledge is private teaching going on at home, outside of regular group practice sessions. In his memoir, Joe Senungetuk writes about how parents used to teach young children certain songs and dances at home with special “practice” songs, meant to provide children access to participation in public performances at a young age:

Much of the singing and dancing among us was subtly but firmly directed to the young. There were even some “practice” songs, used to initiate boys and girls of five or six years of age into the art of dancing and singing. Usually, one or two children of the leading families were taught individually by parents at home. When a celebration was held, these children were asked to start the events, so that their peers could follow them. However, each child was allowed to progress or not, as he wished. In this way, those who were taught by their parents naturally pursued the art with more attention to its finer aspects. After the initiation, the children could go on with their other interests without having to worry about lessons. Then, usually around the age of fifteen to eighteen, the prospective good dancers learned that their success in hunting and fishing went together with their peers’ desires that they do as well in the dance. This mode of teaching the young leaves the individual to make choices. (J. E. Senungetuk 1982, 81)

Senungetuk touches on important points. After learning at home, the youngest children were encouraged to start public dance celebrations with the first dance.

Ethnomusicologist Thomas Johnston noticed a similar phenomenon in the community of Utqiagvik (Barrow), and calls it a style of Inupiaq childrearing that cherishes the
young children and encourages praising their achievements (T. F. Johnston 1991, 50). Senungetuk also points out that when children dance in public events, they encourage their peers to follow along. To me, this element is but one that seems to be related to the teachings of Shin’ichi Suzuki, the violin pedagogue who also recognized the importance and value of children’s peers in formal music education (Starr 2000, 10). Children see similarities to themselves in each other, and might be more inspired to participate by someone close to their own age. Senungetuk also points out that children are introduced to the culture of music and dance with a “practice song,” but then left to make their own choices about whether to participate in dance activities. This philosophy, as applied here to musical education, allows children to follow and develop their own inclinations rather than making them be or do something they do not want to do. Inupiaq educator Leona Okakok points out this attitude is typical in traditional Inupiaq education, as it allows children to grow into their own proclivities and inclinations, producing successful members of society (Kaplan 1984a, 33–34).

In the present group of Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage, there are at least six families who regularly bring their young children to practices. They carry out musical education for their children in a manner that is similar to the ways Senungetuk describes in his memoir. Not all of the children actively participate at all times, but the parents believe that by exposing them to the culture, they will make a choice to participate at a later time in their lives. Jessica is one parent who has been bringing her two daughters to practice sessions and performances as much as she can since the girls were each just a few months old (Jessica, personal communication,
July 23, 2016). Jessica tells me that while they were young, she would sing the Kingikmiut songs with the girls when she was at home, during the girls’ bedtime routines, or doing chores such as cooking or baking, or when out picking berries with them. She would also practice the dances with them at home, and talk about the meanings of the dance motions as best she could. The elder daughter, Serenity, is now nine years old, and is fairly confident as a dancer at practices and at performances. In public performances, Serenity follows her mother and usually practices every dance by her side, earning applause and admiration from audiences. The rest of the dance group lavishes praise on her, and talks about how quickly she learns. Serenity’s younger sister, Raina, who is seven, is much more reluctant to participate in public, but according to the mother, knows the songs and some of the dances. The mother is allowing her to make choices at each session, while simultaneously gently encouraging her to try to dance with the group. Recently the family has been away for months at a time while the parents attend graduate school in another state. Serenity is confident enough that she has been successful in teaching her classmates at her new school a Kingikmiut song and dance with the help of her mother and younger sister as guests in the classroom. When they come back to Anchorage during vacation time, they pick up at dance practice right where they left off. Serenity has become a role model for her peer, another young girl who comes with her father, a drummer and singer in the group. While the children encourage each other, they also know they are participating in an activity alongside adults and elders, and therefore see it as a “real” cultural activity, rather than a “practice” or preparatory activity that is set apart for
children, such as a youth orchestra or youth choir. The tradition of “cherishing” young children as they participate with adults is still a cornerstone of Inupiaq culture.

In 1986, Inupiaq linguist Edna Ahgeak MacLean gave a paper at the meeting of the Alaska Anthropological Association describing her vision of revitalizing the activities of the traditional qazgi (MacLean 1986). MacLean noticed how at that time, Inupiaq elders and parents had no responsibility in the education of young Inupiaq children, because the Euro-American style schools had usurped the role of education in Inupiaq communities for over sixty years. In her paper, MacLean suggests the creation of a teaching space based on the ideas of the traditional qazgi, meant to be complementary to American school requirements, but teaching traditional knowledge using traditional methods. Her idea for the revitalization of the qazgi is to teach Inupiaq skills and values through storytelling, sewing, butchering sea mammals, making hunting tools, practicing endurance games, dancing and singing, and any number of other activities based in traditional knowledge. One of her suggestions is that the elders in the community will be the teachers in the revitalized qazgi (MacLean 1986, 4). The current Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage use this philosophy of teaching every Monday at their practice sessions, and value the knowledge of the elders.

Cecilia Nunooruk Smith is the daughter of a drum leader from Wales (Ron Senungetuk, personal communication, July 2016). Now in her mid-eighties, she was raised in Wales at a time when dancing still had an active presence in the community, before colonial pressures took hold and caused its demise for a time. At times, she has
lived with her husband (who has since passed away) on the Kenai Peninsula and more recently with her son in Wasilla, a community about forty-five miles north of Anchorage. As she no longer drives, dance group participants volunteer to provide transportation for her each week, as I have done fairly often, which allows me or other drivers time to get to know her. Cecilia insists on coming to dance practice as much as possible to “show them the right way,” as she puts it. She often watches the group as they practice the songs and dances from her seat, showing other dancers the arm movements. Then she might insist on doing a particular song again, and she may even get up and dance it to provide a model of the “correct way.” Sometimes participants will sit aside and let her dance by herself, often taking out their cell phones and making video recordings of her demonstrations of the dance motions. Sometimes participants will dance alongside Cecilia, trying to follow her motions exactly. Rarely, Cecilia will instruct with words, and even then she is breviloquent. She might say, “Don’t use your hands too far! Just like that,” showing her hand motions in the manner she thinks is the “right way.” The dance group participants might react by trying out the hand motion, and looking at each other in confirmation, but otherwise accept what she has to say, hoping to put the pieces together with the next time she might talk about it. They have learned that asking her to clarify often results with little or no verbal response. Cecilia’s non-verbal method seems to be typical of Inupiaq ways of teaching.

A fairly observant school teacher from the wider American community noted that her Inupiaq students in Shishmaref have a learning style that is markedly
different to students where she came from, in Iowa, in the American mid-west. After spending over a decade teaching language arts in the Alaskan village school, Sheri Skelton writes:

At the heart of Native teaching and learning are two important skills: observing and listening. Although these are important skills in any classroom, Native observation and listening differ somewhat from those skills in the classrooms I was used to… The Native student does not question what the elder is saying, and the student’s successful acquisition of a particular skill occurs over an extended period of time, not in one test. (Skelton 2004, 78–79)

Skelton’s realization reveals an acute understanding of Inupiaq ways of learning and teaching. She could be describing a typical practice session of the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage instead of her language arts students in Shishmaref. Participants in the dance group observe elders more than they ask questions, and listen when advice is offered from elders.

One more very important detail Skelton points out is that learning takes place over extended periods of time. In the years I have spent with the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage, I have noticed that details about songs and dances might be presented over months or years. For instance, there is one song that is affectionately referred to as “Robot.” In 2011, participants were discussing how the dance motions made reference to the missionaries bringing Christianity to the village. The arms and the body make a sign like a cross. The final motion of the song is to dangle the right hand down as if to hang, symbolizing that humanity is dead. I have heard from dance group members that the title “Robot” refers to how we all become like robots in this newer ideology. In 2016, song leader Roy pointed out that the song
is transcribed in *Iñupiat Aŋgisit Atuutiq: Iñupiat Dance Songs*, a compilation of transcriptions, photographs, and video produced by ethnomusicologist Thomas Johnston (Johnston et al. 1979, 68). Here, the story is presented that the song is about how a visiting musician from another village was impressed with the ability of the female singers from Kingigin. Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage leader Roy used this new information in order to encourage the young female singers in the dance group to sing out more, with quite some success. But even some of the more seasoned female performers were surprised to hear this story, as it hadn’t been spoken about in practice sessions in previous years. The acquisition of knowledge about certain songs does not happen in a single practice session, but over years of practice sessions. In a way, it could be likened to processes of classical musicians, who learn about symphonies or sonatas in different or in deeper ways over the years of repeated practice and performances of the same repertoire. This idea that learning takes place over extended periods could also be attributed to the fact that we are all still learning about the songs and dances as we reinvent the *qazgi* in the city.

### 2.6.2 Composing

In recent times the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage have been participating in the process of composing new songs. In the past, song leader Roy Roberts has made a popular motion dance song, *Khishūaq*, also known as “Chopping Wood,” that has been passed to other dance groups in Alaska (H. A. Senungetuk 2012, 109–10). Roberts claims he created a dance about making pizzas at his work in
a restaurant, but I haven’t heard it practiced or performed in recent years (H. A. Senungetuk 2012, 112). The organization’s most recent composition was completed by teamwork.

Greg Tungwenuk Nothstine, one of the founding members of the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage, works with the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC). In 2015, one of his colleagues, who works with the Injury Prevention Program at ANTHC, had been working with the Alaska Office of Boating Safety on finding ways to promote the “Kids Don’t Float” campaign. This campaign is a statewide injury prevention program developed to address Alaska’s high drowning rate among youth by promoting loaner lifejackets at docks for use by children (State of Alaska 2015). Greg’s colleague expressed the idea that there are three ways to convey a message: “Print media, audio media, and audio/visual media. But if you really want to bring a message home, there’s another way—integrate it into the culture” (Nothstine 2016). Greg’s colleague challenged him to ask his dance group to create a song and a dance containing the safety message supporting the idea that “Kids Don’t Float.” Greg asked several people in the dance group to join him to help compose a song outside of regular dance practice sessions.

At the first session, dance group members Greg, Sophie, Shannon, Susan, and I discussed song texts. Greg’s mother, Sophie Tungwenuk Nothstine, was our Inupiaq language expert, as the younger members present are primarily English-only speakers and Inupiaq language learners. She suggested the words “Uvilat puūbhzhakguilat,” meaning “children can’t swim,” followed by “Uvva neaksaaq puuq,” meaning “here
is a seal float” (field notes, June 25, 2015). Inupiat have used inflated sealskin pokes for centuries as floats in the process of hunting large marine mammals such as walrus and whales (Fair 2006, 10). The word “neaksaaq puuq” seems an appropriate substitute for “float coat,” “life preserver,” or “life jacket,” words that are more difficult to translate directly into Inupiaq language. Greg reports that he and Sophie checked the words with elder relatives who also are native speakers of the Wales dialect of the Inupiaq language, to confirm translation, meaning, and correct pronunciation (Nothstine 2016).

During the next few sessions, the group decided to include simple dance motions to illustrate when people find themselves in or around the water—mainly the outdoor activities of boating and swimming. Traditional dance motions for oaring, as if passing an oar through the water, first to one side, then the other, appear in Inupiaq dances, such as “Naghoogutah,” to indicate travel by boat, so it was an easy decision to use oaring motions to indicate boating. While I have not seen swimming motions used as traditional dance moves, the group seemed to think it would be understood by today’s society to make mimetic dance moves for doing the breast stroke, first to the right side, then to the left. The next motion is best described as making bubbles, like what happens if one sinks in deep water—using the hands to make explosive motions as if bubbles of air were escaping from the mouth and rising upwards. The final motion, indicating floating in water while wearing a life preserver, is bouncing to the beat of the drum while hanging the arms out to the sides, as if floating on top of water.
The actual composing of the song melody came about by group input and through several sessions. I remember spontaneously singing the first words, “Uvilat pūūbzhakguilat,” by simply following the natural rhythm of the words, as if one were speaking, only with a “sing-song” voice. I meant it merely as a suggestion to get people started thinking about musical ideas, but the musical idea caught on right away, and they kept singing it following the suggestion. I was absent at the next session where the group came up with the idea of repeating the word “pūūbzhak” using a spoken voice, in a rhythmical manner. The rest of the song is spoken in chant-style, with a reprise of the rhythmic “pūūbzhak” theme. They added a steady drum beat, and put the dance motions together with the song. By consensus, the song was composed.

Later that summer, the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage performed the new “Float Coat” song at the World Eskimo-Indian Olympics festival in Fairbanks, followed by performances at the Alaska State Fair in Palmer, and the Kingikmiut Dance Festival in Wales. The first few performances were somewhat tentative, but adequately received. By 2016, the group became more confident in their presentations, directing them towards children in the audiences, by inviting them to participate in learning the safety message through dance. Because the dance moves are so simple and easily understood by children, they are able to follow along right away. Greg spoke about the song:

Between that and everything else, people have found it somewhat fun to do…The motions are simple, the message is simple, “kids don’t float,” here, wear a float jacket. The last motion of it was, float, at the end. When you wear your float jacket, you get to float, and you get to
survive in the water. As far as singing and dancing goes, as far as integrating safety messages into culture, this particular dance, I believe, is the first of its kind, because it conveys a safety message: the importance of wearing a personal floatation device while you are out on the water. (Nothstine 2016)

Greg’s take on the Float Coat song is almost philosophical in nature, in that our Indigenous societies and cultures have endured so many pressures but have managed to survive, as if wearing a float coat. At the 2016 Kingikmiut Dance Festival, the reception of the Float Coat song was overwhelming, because of the enthusiastic participation of the children. Greg says that all new employees at his workplace have been learning it during their orientation sessions this year. They also practiced it at their employee picnic, with executive directors leading the way, setting an example of promoting a safety message for all employees. Greg was invited to perform it with his young son in various locations such as at a meeting in Utqiagvik (Barrow), and at the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C. with Alaska congressman Don Young. Future plans include making a public service announcement for publication on a local television station and on other social media outlets. The success of this new song and dance came about with strong leadership, but by group input.

In literature, few Inupiaq authors have provided glimpses into process of composing new songs and dances. In his memoir I Am Eskimo: Aknik My Name (1959), Aknik Paul Green of Kivalina, Alaska, wrote one short statement regarding the creation of new songs. “Every year at Kotzebue we make new Eskimo song and put new motion dance on them. We make up those Eskimo song, we never write it
down, we just remember them in our mind” (Green 1959, 58). The fact that he remembers making new songs every year shows a living practice of composing, rather than heavily relying on songs of the ancestors, as has been a strong tradition in recent times, especially for many groups that have been recently vitalizing their practice after enduring decades of suppressive attitudes towards Indigenous music and dance from outside sources. The process of committing songs to memory is still practiced today, as none of the Inupiaq dance groups rely on written musical notation. I have seen some individuals write song texts in personal notes for use while they are learning songs, but after a short while the notes are no longer needed.

In a podcast documentary, Ugiuvangmiut King Island Inupiaq Sylvester Ayek explains that people of his community used to create a new song for each successful polar bear hunt:

We don’t live on the island anymore where they’d get polar bears by the middle of the winter, but we preserve the polar bear songs that they composed for each hunter bringing home polar bear. They composed new songs for that particular polar bear every time when a hunter brings one in or kills a polar bear. (Sallee 2016, 18:39-19:07)

Ayek refers to the forced relocation of King Island residents, caused by the Bureau of Indian Affairs that closed the King Island school in the late 1950s (D. Kingston and Marino 2010, 122). The Ugiuvangmiut King Island community maintained their culture in Nome, where they continue to practice the old polar bear songs, but not many compose new songs. Ayek explains his grief that few people are active in composing new songs in his community in the present day:

The hardest thing for me as a teacher and mentor is that we don’t make songs, new songs, anymore, which we experienced growing up on the
island and where many of the villages composed new songs for that winter, and we don’t do that anymore. It’s one of the hardest things I could try in my life. I’ve tried for many years to compose or to make new songs and I can’t do it. (Sallee 2016, 20:02-20:32)

Ayek is certainly a creative person, as he has many major visual artworks in collections and in public spaces in Alaska and Washington, D.C. But he notes his frustration with the difficulty of composing new songs for his group. He credits his mother with composing forty to fifty songs that have become part of the repertoire of the King Island Dancers (Milt Lee 2012). Ugiuvangmiut Inupiaq Deanna Paniataaq Kingston is in accordance with Ayek, when she states, “Composing Inupiaq songs is not easy and there were not many Ugiuvangmiut who were gifted in doing so” (D. P. Kingston 2009, 265).

Historical accounts written by anthropologists, teachers, or other visitors provide interesting insights into the process of composing new Inupiaq songs. Ayek’s description of composing a song for a bear kill is corroborated in the memoir written by Harrison Thornton. Thornton’s statement, written in the early 1890s, shows how the tradition of composing new songs for successful bear hunts was an active tradition among Kingikmiut at the Cape Prince of Wales:

When a hunter kills his first bear, especially if it be early in the season, a “bear dance” is given to celebrate the event… The hunter stations himself at the center of the room. At his feet lie his trusty rifle, the dead animal’s skull, and a piece of the rump-bone and tail. The musicians and singers strike up a wild, weird song: descriptive of the hunter’s courage and skill on the one hand and the huge beast’s ferocious charge on the other, as he feels the death-dealing bullets tear his vitals. Frequently the song is improvised, either in whole or in part, for the occasion. (H. R. Thornton 1931, 112)
Thornton indicates that songs were improvised on the spot, adapted to portray the particular hunt of the day. He continues in his text to explain that the hunter dances first with his wife, then his mother, then with other women who wish to “partake of the hunter’s reflected glory” (H. R. Thornton 1931, 112). In an interview presented in Natives of the Far North (1994), Joe Senungetuk confirms the practice of polar bear dances in Wales during his early childhood: “I was a spectator at some of the Wales dances, celebrations of successful polar bear hunts,’ Senungetuk recalled. ‘I have watched traditional native women’s dances. They were just beginning to die out when I was very young, six or seven years old’” (Lowry 1994, 121). As Joe was born in 1940 (J. E. Senungetuk 1982, vii), he is referring to the late 1940s when people stopped practicing dance and music in Wales.24

In 1946 explorer Laura Boulton visited Utqiagvik (Barrow), where she made audio recordings of Inupiaq singing. She wrote about her experiences in The Music Hunter (1969), where she mentions the temporal intention of Inupiaq compositions:

There were many dance songs but they were composed, flourished temporarily, and often died within a year or two, much like our own popular music…Most singers had their own songs with lines they themselves had composed. One man, when asked how many songs he had, answered: “I have many. Everything in me is song. I sing as I breathe.” (Boulton 1969, 390)

In her understanding, Inupiaq songs weren’t meant to last, and were replaced by the composition of new songs as needed or desired. Boulton’s impression reflects her informant’s constant process of thinking about music, to the point of having little

24 For more on the history of the cessation of dance practice in Wales, see section 1.2, American Influences.
worry if a song was forgotten over the years, because a new one would come along soon enough. That she likens Inupiaq songs to Euro-American popular music of her day indicates her awareness of the temporary nature of songs in both cultures.

In 1959, as an undergraduate at Yale University, Nicholas Gubser spent time in the village of Anaktuvuk Pass in the Brooks Range in northern Alaska as part of an archaeological study. After spending a year with Nunamiut, he devoted his senior year of college to writing his ethnographic study that resulted in the book The Nunamiut Eskimos: Hunters of Caribou (1965). Gubser’s description of musical composition indicates a process that occurs quickly, just prior to a dance performance. Gubser relates the story of how a man composed a song while walking to the community house before an evening of dance:

A song was, and is, composed in a few minutes. My chief informant once composed a song as he walked up to the karigi for an evening of singing and dancing. When he arrived, his song was not quite finished, so he walked around the karigi two or three times before entering. When the drums were ready, he announced that he had composed a song and proceeded to sing it, tapping the edge of a drum very lightly. At first it was wordless—only a melody with a definite rhythm and a variation of three or four vocalic tones. After singing it two or three times, the men who were sitting near the drums began to join the composer in certain passages they had learned. Before long, the drummers had learned the whole song. The following day, the composer sang the song at my request a few times and spontaneously added a few words reminiscent of the dance. (Gubser 1965, 169)

Gubser describes a process that is almost effortless, as the composer completed the process while walking around the community house. Of course, Gubser reports the process of composition that he saw and heard, not including any pre-composition that may have happened in the composer’s mind previous to the event he describes. But if
composing was a regular process, as Ayek relates regarding new songs composed for every successful polar bear hunt, perhaps it was not difficult for Gubser’s informant to compose on the spot.

In an article, Thomas Johnston briefly describes his impressions of the Inupiaq need to create new songs, relying on life experiences that become song content:

A prime method of augmenting dance repertory is, of course, the industrious and continuous creation of new dance sequences and routines. To facilitate this, the male or female dancer must possess a broad range of life experiences in the various realms of subsistence (sealing, trapping, skin-sewing, etc.), and must be gregarious enough to attract disciples and adherents willing to learn the complex sequences. (T. F. Johnston 1975, 4)

Johnston mentions that composing new songs was a continuous effort, supporting Boulton’s observations. Johnston points out that the popularity of the composer helps when teaching the new song to others. In a subsequent article, Johnston makes note that “Composers of sayuun [motion] dance songs are held in greater esteem than composers of the atuutipiaq [invitational] type” (T. F. Johnston 1976c, 9), meaning that songs with choreographed dance motions hold more value among participants than invitational songs where the dances are improvised by all. He also notes that composition is carried out by both men and women: “Women sometimes compose sayuun dance songs and/or devise sayuun motions, particularly if they are fairly wealthy and respected women” (T. F. Johnston 1976c, 9). While egalitarian in regards to sexes, Johnston notes the privilege afforded to the wealthy.

While few observers and Indigenous authors describe the processes of composition, none described the process of composing by committee or consensus, as
the present Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage created the “Float Coat”
song and dance. While no authors describe the process, it does not rule out the
possibility that Inupiat have used the method before. But for the Kingikmiut Dancers
and Singers of Anchorage, it is a new process that appears to be enjoyable and
successful. They are talking about creating another song in the future regarding
smoke-free living, another public service announcement in support of living a healthy
lifestyle.

The Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage hold dance practices every
Monday night at the CITC office building. More than just rehearsals, the dance
practices recall the ancestral methods of creating community, by continuing to use
Kingikmiut ideals of singing, drumming, dancing, composing songs, and education.
This urban qazgi they have created is a safe space for expressing Native ways of
knowing through the performing arts, resulting in an acoustemology that reflects an
egalitarian society with connections to ancestral homeland of Kingigin, the Cape
Prince of Wales, for Kingikmiut and Kingikmiut descendants who have relocated to
an urban location. The next chapter addresses performances of the Kingikmiut
Dancers and Singers of Anchorage, including public and semi-private performances
in the Anchorage area, and group travel to other parts of the state.
Chapter 3

Moveable Qazgit

In addition to their regular practice sessions on Monday evenings at the CITC office building, the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage present their cultural performative art in various venues in Anchorage, as well as in other locations in other parts of Alaska. Some events are public functions, and some are semi-private in nature. Some events are intended as embodiments of an extended Alaska Native community, or a larger community of the imagination (B. Anderson 2006, 6). These events are at times called “performances,” even by participants in the group. At other times, they say they are simply “sharing our culture,” depending on the audience, the situation, and participants involved. In this section, several instances will be discussed as examples of how the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers interact with the community of Anchorage, including the wider community and tourist audiences, with the greater Kingikmiut community, with other Inupiaq communities, and with the larger Alaska Native community. The purpose of this current chapter is to examine different types of performances, and the issues that surround those performances that the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage regularly participate in.

One distinguishing factor in presentational performances by the Kingikmiut Singers and Dancers of Anchorage is that they generally perform in other locations separate from the CITC office building. In the greater Anchorage area, typical performances might take place at the Alaska Native Heritage Center, at the Alaska
Native Medical Center, at the Dena’ina Convention Center during the Alaska Federation of Natives Convention, at downtown hotel meeting rooms where they provide cultural entertainment for meetings such as the Sitnasuak Native Corporation Annual Meetings, outside on the street at the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race Ceremonial Start, or at the Alaska State Fair in Palmer on the Dena’ Stage. In addition, during a typical year the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers may travel to Fairbanks to participate in the World Eskimo-Indian Olympics festival, and to Wales to participate in the Kingikmiut Dance Festival. The fact that most performances take place outside of the practice space at the CITC building may seem ordinary, but to me, these traveling performances are emblematic of traditional Inupiaq ways of being. As scholar Ernest Burch suggests, “wherever men gathered to chat and work on equipment was a qargi, as was any place where larger gatherings took place, regardless of whether it was enclosed or in the open air” (Burch 2006, 106). I suggest that the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage operate the idea of a moveable qazgi when they travel to different venues to perform and create a sense of Inupiaq space wherever they go.

3.1 Historic Inupiaq Travel and Temporary Qazgit

In order to relate the present-day performance activities of the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage to some of the ways their ancestors traveled to dance festivals and trade fairs, I examine literature regarding Inupiaq travel in the historic era. For many people from the wider community in the present era, it may
seem surprising to reveal how Inupiat developed interconnectedness between communities before the ease of air travel, before social media, or even before the existence of telephones or television which made communications across vast regions somewhat easier. Travel was an important part of Inupiaq ancestral life, as will be discussed here. Further, Inupiat were practical travelers and made temporary or moveable qazgit wherever they went, using upturned boats or driftwood frames covered with tarpaulins. These moveable qazgit were just as important as the home qazgi, as places for celebrations, but also spaces for trading songs and developing relationships with other Inupiaq peoples or nations through dance.

3.1.1 Ancestral Travels

The current vitalization of dance festivals has its roots in ancient traditions of trade fairs, religious festivals, and dance festivals, all of which involved the practice of performative arts. Through the examination of oral history and early written accounts of festivals and trade fairs, one can begin to understand the importance of travel for gatherings in ancestral Inupiaq life, and how they relate to the current practices of dance festivals. In a manuscript publication of 1964, John A. Kakaruk and William Oquilluk tell the story of the Eagle Wolf Dance, also known as the Messenger Feast (Kakaruk and Oquilluk 1964). The two authors were born in the late nineteenth century, and witnessed the “last authentic performance” of the Eagle-Wolf dance in 1918 in the village of Mary’s Igloo (Kakaruk and Oquilluk 1964, 1). They point out that the visitors for that performance traveled from Wales, about one
hundred miles away by dogsled (Kakaruk and Oquilluk 1964, 1). Then the authors proceed to tell the ancient story of how a man went out hunting and killed a giant eagle, and subsequently learned from spirits who appeared to him how to prepare the first Eagle-Wolf dance. After he returned from hunting, the man instructed the rest of the community members how to prepare the finest ceremonial clothing, foods, drums, songs, dances, and games based on what he learned from the spirits. The community sent messengers to the next village to invite them for a feast, and danced together for four nights in the qazgi.

In her book featuring the photography of her grandfather, Charles Menadelook, born in Wales in 1892, Eileen Norbert describes the Messenger Feast held in Wales. “One of the most exciting events in young Menadelook’s life was the Messenger Feast hosted by the Kingigmiut for the Kauweramiut (People of Kauwerak, a village later known as Mary’s Igloo)” (Norbert 2016, 24). Norbert’s testimony suggests the reciprocity of the Messenger Feast with the neighboring community as described by Kakaruk and Oquilluk. In her book, Norbert also includes two pencil drawings made by Charles Menadelook’s father, Kokituk (pages 18 and 20). These drawings feature images of the Messenger Feast dance festival. Norbert credits the images of the drawings to the collection of the Anchorage Museum of History and Art (Norbert 2016, 18, 20), and the associated Smithsonian Institution’s Arctic Studies Center estimates the drawings to date from 1890 (Smithsonian Institution
These images of the dances of the Messenger Feast may provide the earliest first-hand glimpse of this dance festival. The details in the drawing on page 18 show the dramatic set in the qazgi, with holes cut out for the wolf figures, and the headdresses of the dancers who sit atop the set. On page 20, the drawing shows male dancers with fancy dance gloves and feather headdresses and female dancers holding staffs decorated with eagle down, just as Kakaruk and Oquilluk describe in their telling of the creation of the Eagle-Wolf Dance (Kakaruk and Oquilluk 1964, 10–11). These contemporaneous images and descriptions arising from two villages, Wales and Mary’s Igloo, show that the festival was a shared activity that created a sense of interconnectedness between the villages.

Other accounts of travel for participating in trade fairs abound in early literature. In his memoir, Harrison Thornton reports on the travel habits of Kingikmiut in the late nineteenth century:

Besides going to the Kotzebue Sound district, they likewise make trading voyages to the Diomede Islands, to East Cape and other adjacent Siberian points, where they get furs and deerskins, and even to Indian Point (on the Asiatic side), which is about 150 miles from Cape Prince of Wales in a southwesterly direction. And all these journeys are made in frail-looking canoes of walrus hide. (H. R. Thornton 1931, 120)

Thornton reveals his astonishment that these seafaring people traveled on a regular basis in umiat, larger whaling boats made from walrus hide and driftwood, which

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25 The images by Kokituk are currently available to view online, via the Smithsonian Institution’s Arctic Studies Center website: p. 18 of Menadelook/Norbert: http://alaska.si.edu/media.asp?id=35&object_id=181
p. 20 of Menadelook/Norbert: http://alaska.si.edu/media.asp?id=36&object_id=181
26 Umiaq (singular), umiat (plural).
he deemed “frail.” From what I understand from oral tradition as told by my father and my uncle Joe, umiat are created to be flexible in order to handle harsh conditions, both on water and on ice, while carrying heavy loads. Susan Fair also comments that “[l]ike northern Native cultures themselves, the source of the skin boat’s strength is its flexibility” (Fair 2005, 235). Thornton may have been more accustomed to traveling by steam sailing ship, such as the steam cutter Bear, a nearly two-hundred foot ship upon which he arrived in Wales in 1890 (H. R. Thornton 1931, xiii). In any case, Thornton continues his description of Kingikmiut travel with an observation that music and dance is a regular part of travel by umiaq, especially to the trade fair near present-day Kotzebue:

The voyages take place in the months of July, August and September. As a rule, the whole family goes along; and, as dancing and other festivities constitute a part of the proceedings at the annual trading rendezvous on Kotzebue Sound, they look upon the trip in very much the same way that city people regard their summer’s outing in the mountains or at the seashore. (H. R. Thornton 1931, 120)

Thornton’s description discusses Kingikmiut traveling throughout the Bering Strait region, giving more attention to the trade fair at Sisualik, located on a sand-spit near present-day Kotzebue. The trade fair at Sisualik drew as many as two thousand people (Burch, Jr. 2013, 94), making it one of the largest trade fairs in the Bering Strait region. John Cantwell, a lieutenant aboard the revenue marine steamer Corwin in 1884, reports seeing ten umiat from Cape Prince of Wales and two from Point Hope visiting the Kotzebue Sound for the trade fair (Cantwell 1889, 72–73). As Susan Fair points out, the Sisualik trade fair attracted visitors and trade goods from many parts of Alaska, Siberia, and Canada (Fair 2000, 477). The trade fair was not
only an important part of the economic process, but also a time of building niuviriik, or partnership through trade (Burch, Jr. 2013, 94). Just like any other business partnership, this type of trust relationship is built over time, and requires meeting each other at fairs multiple times over many years. In addition to business partnerships, people established family relations, as many people did, and still do, meet their spouses at dance festivals. The sense of interconnectedness is constructed through interaction only achieved through travel to trade fairs and dance festivals.

In 1902 Alaska judge James Wickersham took a break from his duties in the courtroom in Eagle City near the Canadian border and visited the Cape Prince of Wales. He wrote a letter to the American Antiquarian and Oriental journal about his intent to publish an article regarding the people of Wales. In this letter, he describes the travel habits of Kingikmiut, especially in regards to crossing the Bering Strait:

The natives cross and re-cross frequently, especially in the summer time, but during some winters the ice packs in the straits and freezes there and they are able to cross for some time with dog teams. I saw the natives go out on the floating ice for seals and white bear and I can see no difficulty in going on over to the Diomedes. Many natives are carried away on this floating ice from East Cape, the Diomedes and Cape Prince of Wales and frequently drift to the opposite shore. It is only a day’s journey in their boats in the summer time and regular international trading has been carried on from those three points as long as Eskimos have lived on the Arctic shore. (J. Wickersham 1902a, 187)

One can almost read a sense of marvel in Wickersham’s description, as travel by iceberg seemed to be a new concept for him. He confirms that travel across the Bering Strait was a regular affair for trading, taking only a day to cross by umiaq in summer, or by dogsled on the hard pack ice in winter.
In the 1920s and 1930s travel and trade continued across the Bering Strait, but due to increasing international tensions, governmental agencies were increasing their presence on both sides of the border that runs between Alaska and the Russian Far East. The international border, as well as the international dateline, lies between the two Diomede Islands at the center of the Bering Strait, between the westernmost point of mainland North America (Cape Prince of Wales) and the easternmost point of mainland Russia (East Cape). Linguist Michael Krauss notes a 1938 agreement between the Soviet Union and the United States that regulated travel by Indigenous peoples across the Bering Strait, which previously had not been a concern (Krauss 1994, 368). After World War II, the “Cold War” period began, and this travel agreement regarding Indigenous peoples of the Bering Strait was nullified, fearing invasion or infiltration through a penetrable border. All travel between Alaska and the Soviet Union was halted for the next forty years, cutting off ancient connections that had previously been maintained through dance and trade festivals.

Eileen Norbert edited and posthumously published an article written by her uncle, Roger Kokituk Menadelook, son of Wales elder Charles Menadelook (Norbert 2013; R. K. Menadelook 2013). In her introduction to Roger’s article, Norbert describes how, in early August 1948, her uncle set out with a group by umiaq from Little Diomede Island, on the U.S. side of the border, traveling to East Cape, Russia, for a dance festival. What this group of eighteen people did not know was that the agreement between the governments of the United States and the U.S.S.R. that had previously allowed inter-continental travel had been revoked. Instead of sending a
telegram, the U.S. government officials sent a letter announcing the change. This letter had been mailed from Washington D.C., but had not yet arrived, as mail took months to reach Diomede during this era. The group was stopped by the Soviet station on Big Diomede Island, and held against their will until the end of September that year. They had not planned on staying away from home very long, thus were not dressed for the coming winter weather nor did they bring enough provisions to sufficiently sustain themselves for so many weeks. In his article (R. K. Menadelook 2013), Roger Menadelook describes how they were forced to camp out on the rocky beach and subjected to interrogation by Soviet officials for weeks. In the end they were released rather than imprisoned, but not without ailment coming to each of the travelers from living out in the cold with little food. Thus began the forty-year official separation of Indigenous peoples who previously shared dancing and trading through travel.

In the late 1980s Jim Stimpfle was a real estate businessman in Nome, where he lived with his wife, Yaayuk (Bernadette) Alvanna Stimpfle, who is Ugiuvangmiut Inupiaq from the King Island community. Jim had dreams of connecting with people across the Bering Strait, keenly aware of the restrictions about traveling where his wife’s family used to go to trade and dance. He sent up weather balloons loaded with welcome messages, hoping they would float over to Chukotka, a sort of message in a bottle, but launched into the air. This idea developed into making a request to the board members of the commercial jet company Alaska Airlines if they would sponsor a flight across the Bering Strait to break the ice, so to speak, of the Cold War
On June 13, 1988, Alaska Airlines took eighty-two people from Nome to Provideniya for a one-day tour, including state government officials, television and news media reporters, over thirty residents of St. Lawrence Island and Nome, plus others interested in creating relationships for future international economic development. The day included tours of the museum in Provideniya, the leather factory, the port, and the kindergarten, followed by a dance concert featuring “Siberian and Alaskan performers,” as they are listed in the program for the trip (Cowper 1988, 2). In a retrospective program given at the Alaska World Affairs Council, Ugiuvangmiut Inupiaq Francis Alvanna reports that as a member of the dance group from Nome that was supposed to perform in Provideniya that day, they ran out of time for the King Island Dancers to perform, but he noticed that “[Their] dances were very similar to ours” (Alvanna 2013, 4). Even with a very short visit, exchange across the Bering Strait had begun once again.

In 1989, with the revolutions that ended communist era, came the end of the “Ice Curtain” that had separated Alaska from Russia. Visa-free travel for Indigenous peoples became available once again, recalling the pre-1948 era (Schweitzer and Golovko 2004, 60). In the 1990s, travel between Alaska and the Russian Far East was very popular—Krauss notes that by 1991, the Russian airline Aeroflot held regularly scheduled flights from Anchorage to Provideniya, Anadyr, Magadan, and Khabarovsk, transporting upwards of ten thousand passengers by the end of that season alone (Krauss 1994, 377). Scholars Igor Krupnik and Michael Chlenov close their book *Yupik Transitions* (Krupnik and Chlenov 2013) with a poignant anecdote
about a 1991 exchange between a group of people from the villages of Lavrentiya, Uelen, Lorino, and Inchoun on the Russian coast, who came across the Bering Strait in five small open boats in order to have a reunion with relatives and friends in Shishmaref, Alaska, a village just over seventy miles north of Wales. Just after they landed on the beach at Shishmaref, the visitors pulled out their traditional drums and began singing and dancing on the beach, as their ancestors might have done at the end of a long trip. The hosts, the villagers of Shishmaref, invited the visitors in to the school, where they responded by singing Christian hymns, as they forgot their ancestral songs due to the colonial influences of American mission schools. The authors point out that since that time, the citizens of Shishmaref had become inspired to vitalize their dances as a result of meeting with their long-lost relations (Krupnik and Chlenov 2013, 300–302). Indeed, the Shishmaref Dancers participated in the 2016 Kingikmiut Dance Festival in Wales with much acclaim (Tördal 2016).

By the late 1990s, Inupiat on the Seward Peninsula were vitalizing the practice of music and dance, and were especially interested in regenerating alliances across the Bering Strait via dance. In 2004 the Kingikmiut Dance Festival held their fifth annual celebration in Wales, and invited a dance group from Siberia to participate in the festivities. In the video *Nilġaq: 5th Annual Kingikmiut Dance Festival* (Village of Wales IRA and Williams 2004), Kingikmiut elder and dance festival organizer Winton Weyapuk, Jr., states that over the decades of his life in Wales, people would wonder about what was going on across the Bering Strait, and still had not had a chance to meet their neighbors, until then (Village of Wales IRA
and Williams 2004, 2:50-3:28). This dance exchange was successful, even though many of the participants could not understand each other and had to use interpreters to translate between Russian and English languages, as the Siberian Yupiit from Chukotka did not speak the Inupiaq language spoken in Wales. In recent years Kingikmiut Dance Festival planners from the Village of Wales have indicated interest in inviting dance groups from Chukotka again, but funding and the organization required to obtain paperwork for special visa-free travel passes and travel arrangements still makes it difficult to materialize.

More recently, other festivals have been successful in arranging cultural exchanges across the Bering Strait. The National Park Service’s Shared Beringian Heritage Program held their Beringia Days International Conference in Nome in 2011. In addition to the Nome-based Inupiaq dance group the King Island Dancers, the conference was able to bring the Solnyshko (Sun) Dance Ensemble from Novoe Chaplino, Chukotka to share their music and dance with the conference (Shared Beringian Heritage Program 2011, 8). In 2013, the community of Kotzebue secured a grant from the Shared Beringian Heritage Program to invite a group of seventeen dancers and drummers from Uelen and Lavrentiya to participate in its vitalized Qatnut trade fair (Eudes 2013). In 2014, the community of Novoe Chaplino hosted its inaugural Beringia Arctic Games, and welcomed visitors from Alaska, Canada, Sápmi, and Greenland. The games were opened with ceremonies of traditional dances and music (Schwing 2014).
Visa-free travel across the Bering Strait for Indigenous peoples has not been without problems, however. Testimony presented at the 2011 Beringia Days Conference revealed problems in communications between countries, and paperwork for special visas required at the time was often lost in transmission or denied (National Park Service 2013, 28). I was lucky enough to join the Beringia Days International Conference held in Anadyr, Chuktoka, in 2013, but I can attest that the cost of attaining a visa required at that time was fairly expensive and somewhat difficult to acquire. The online Russian news agency Russia Beyond the Headlines posted an article in 2015 noting a “new” law introducing visa-free travel, using an insert for the passport, making travel across the Bering Strait easier for Indigenous peoples (Russia Beyond the Headlines 2015).

Even though governmental agencies have posed obstacles to Indigenous peoples who wished to travel across the Bering Strait during the mid-twentieth century, the rise of festivals within Alaska is noticeable during the same time period. As ethnomusicologist Maria Williams suggests, this rise in regional, village, and statewide performance events coincides with the passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) of 1971 (M. D. P. Williams 1996, 2). The passage of a law upholding the rights of Indigenous peoples gave rise to responses to previous repressive attitudes presented by government and religious organizations, often expressed as recommitment to traditional ways and values. These traditional ways

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27 During the writing of this dissertation, the Bering Strait Visa-Free Travel Program was still in effect, but the U.S. State Department web site with the details on how to obtain special status had been removed upon new government administration that took effect in January 2017 (U.S. State Department 2017).
include festivals where people share dance and music, native foods, cultural arts, and a love of nostalgia, often centering on the people’s relationship with a place.

3.1.2 Moveable Qazgit

Throughout my life I have heard oral histories of how Inupiat have used umiat, or large skin boats, as temporary shelters when traveling. Here, a brief examination of early historical eyewitness accounts shows how ancestral Inupiat created their temporary qazgit and used them as shelters for music and dance ceremonies. This evidence of the ancestral use of the “moveable qazgi” will help show how the current Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage base their current activities in the ways of the ancestors.

In his book Social Life in Northwest Alaska, Burch comments on the way Inupiat traveled in the 19th century—by boat, by sled, or on foot. They would usually carry a substantial amount of tools and camping and cooking equipment for use in case of emergency, or as he calls it, “traveling heavy” (Burch 2006, 283). It took a significant amount of organization and effort to travel with a considerable amount of goods, but it could be important in a difficult situation due to changes in weather or other unforeseen circumstances. In addition to being prepared for harsh weather conditions, traveling Inupiat were prepared to dance and sing, whether out hunting or traveling to a trade fair. A typical multipurpose item used for ocean travel (and also often adapted for travel over ice and snow) was the umiaq, made from a wooden frame stretched with oogrook (bearded seal) or walrus hide. In his memoir, Thornton
describes the number and size of large skin boats in Wales the early 1890s: “There are now 51 oomiaks, or large canoes, in the village. These boats are generally from 35 to 40 feet long, about 8 feet wide amidships, and approximately 4 feet deep. They can carry fifteen or twenty persons or about 5 tons of freight” (H. R. Thornton 1931, 125). Upon landing, these large open boats could be converted to temporary shelters by turning them on their sides and propping them up with oars, driftwood logs, or other materials. Scholar Susan Fair notes, “[a]fter whales had been captured, participating umiaks—propped partly open onshore—marked off ceremonial space and substituted for community centers (qazgríit) during traditional times” (Fair 2005, 241). Fair notes that at the time of her article, skin boats were still being used in this way for the outdoor Nalukataq whaling festivals in Point Hope and in Utqiaġvik (Barrow) (Fair 2005, 241).

In 1889, Captain Michael Healy of the revenue marine steamer Corwin published a report to the U.S. Government regarding his explorations in Northwest Alaska from 1884. On July 8, 1884, he dispatched his third lieutenant, John Cantwell, to explore the Kobuk River. 28 Cantwell’s report describes the trade fair in the Kotzebue region that includes details about Inupiat visiting from Wales who used their umiat as personal shelter, and then as a ceremonial space:

August 22, 1884…When we returned to our camp I learned that ten large boats had arrived from Cape Prince of Wales and two from Point

28 Healy and Cantwell use the spelling “Kowak” instead of the currently accepted spelling “Kobuk” (C. M. A. Healy 1889, 49). Second Assistant Engineer S. B. McLenegan explains the orthography in the same report: “The word Koo or Kū in the dialect of nearly all these northern Eskimos signifies river, and the suffix wūk, pūk, or būk means large or big. Hence the native meaning of Kowak or Kūūk, as some authorities spell the name, is Big River” (McLenegan 1889, 105)
Hope. I visited the village after dinner, and found the whole place in an uproar of excitement. Tents were being pitched, boats hauled out and converted into houses…

August 23, 1884…Soon after breakfast this morning an Indian ran across the fields and informed us that the natives of different settlements were about to celebrate the arrival of the Cape Prince of Wales chief by having a dance, and wanted me to be present. I immediately started with Andre, and in a short while the tent of the Kotzebue Sound chief was reached. After partaking rather gingerly of some seal meat which he offered us we started together for the scene of the dance. Upon a level plot of ground a short distance from the village about twelve hundred natives were gathered, and the sound of the drums and the howling chant of the singers announced the fact that the ball had opened. On our approach the crowd around the dancers fell back and allowed us to pass through to a spot favorable for observation. Within the circle some half dozen Indians, dressed in fancifully-trimmed parkas and wearing highly-ornamented gloves and boots, were going through the most astonishing contortions, sometimes leaping high into the air and doubling themselves up with head, hands, and feet all in a bunch, or standing in one place, swaying to and fro, and making spasmodic gestures, with their hands clenched and necks stiffened to a rigidity that was appalling. With horrible grimaces they glared around at the crowd, in every action keeping time with the musicians, who were ranged in a line behind them. The musicians kept up a continual beating on their drums, accompanied by a chanting song, the words of which were indistinguishable. (Cantwell 1889, 72–73)

Cantwell’s description of ten boats arriving from Wales indicates the importance of the trade fair in the Kotzebue region, as it must have taken a lot of people and organization to carry out such a feat. If Cantwell’s assessment is correlated with Thornton’s determination of fifty-one umiat in Wales less than a decade later, that would mean that nearly one-fifth of the total umiat from Wales were used to attend the trade fair, carrying many people and goods for trade. As discussed earlier, Burch called Sisualik the largest fair in the region, with as many as two thousand people arriving “for several weeks of dancing, feasting, athletic competition and trading”
(Burch 2013, 94). Cantwell’s description of the dance signifying the arrival of a chief from the Cape Prince of Wales indicates the status of the people of Wales as top traders of the Arctic. Earlier in his report, Cantwell indicates: “The chief of the Prince of Wales Eskimos is probably the most powerful magnate of this region, owing no doubt to the fact that his settlement is a convenient stopping place for vessels having these articles of contraband trade on board” (Cantwell 1889, 71). The dance of honor Cantwell witnessed, held on a beach setting, was a moveable qazgi created at a trade fair.

Ernest William Hawkes provides a series of photographic illustrations of an umiaq used as a temporary qazgi or ceremonial space in his publication The Dance Festivals of the Alaskan Eskimo (Hawkes 1914). On Plate XII and Plate XIII (see Figures 1 and 2) there are a total of four photographic images of five young men sitting and playing drums in front of an upturned umiaq, accompanied by one young man dancing on a tarpaulin placed on the ground in front of the men. Hawkes provides little information about these images. His “Key to Plate XII” and “Key to Plate XIII” indicate the name of the dancer and his relation to a chief, but little else: “The Chief’s Son, Okvaíok is dancing” (Hawkes 1914, 44–46). The captions below images “B” and “D” read “Men’s Dance,” giving little information other than the gender of the dancer. Hawkes does not indicate where the images were taken, although he attests in his introduction that he spent two years on the Diomede Islands and one year at St. Michael (Hawkes 1914, 5). Since it is an image of a traveling group setting up a dance space on the beach, it could be anywhere there were
Figure 1. Hawkes, Ernest William. *The Dance Festivals of the Alaskan Eskimo* (1914). Plate XII.
Figure 2. Hawkes, Ernest William. *The Dance Festivals of the Alaskan Eskimo* (1914). Plate XIII.
established wooden buildings, and flat beaches—perhaps Teller, Nome, Wales, or Utqiaġvik. In any case, the imagery provided by Hawkes in these four photographs shows how Inuit used the umiaq as a windbreak shelter on the beach. The umiaq may also provide a sound resonator akin to a shell used to enrich the experience of musicians in outdoor chamber music concerts (cf. Pignatelli et al. 2015). And, these images show how the umiaq served as a marker of the temporary qazgi for spontaneous music and dance from over a century ago.

In addition to the use of overturned umiat as temporary qazgit, scholar Mary Ann Larson notes that Inupiat created other shelters suitable for ceremonies. “Snow houses, upturned umiat, and tents were all considered by consultants on the North Slope to be qariyit proper…large skin tents were put into service for very large gatherings or in coastal locations with no permanent qariyit” (Larson 1995, 209). In his report from 1889, Cantwell provides a photographic image of a large temporary dance house, on the plate following page 64, labeled “Indian Keshagem. (Dance House.)” (as suggested in Lee and Reinhardt 2003, 110–11; original in Cantwell 1889, 64 ff.; see Figure 3). The tent-style qazgi pictured here consists of numerous large driftwood logs, each posted into the ground about two to three meters apart, held in place with logs lashed in place as crossbars, and the entire structure partially draped with tarpaulins (likely made of walrus hide, or perhaps made with sail cloths from whaling ships), to create a large shelter from rain or wind. On this image provided by Cantwell, there are three people standing inside the structure with their faces obscured by logs or shadow. Even though Cantwell describes the structure as
“Indian,” their clothing identifies the occupants as coastal Inupiat, as the tusk design on the parka of the man in the middle gives them away. In a subsequent image following page 84, the same temporary qazgi structure is the backdrop for an assemblage of over fifty Inupiat, with the caption “Natives at Rendezvous near Icy Cape” (Cantwell 1889, 84 ff., see Figure 4), identifying the location of this temporary qazgi. In his lengthy description of the honor dance for the Chief of the Cape Prince of Wales noted earlier, Cantwell does not distinguish between the use of upturned umiat or tent structures as temporary qazgit. Rather, the combination of the

Figure 3. Cantwell, John C. “Indian Keshagem. (Dance-House.)” Image from plate 64 ff. “A Narrative Account of the Exploration of the Kowak River, Alaska” (Cantwell 1889).

29 In regards to Inupiaq men’s parkas, Burch notes that the “two white strips (manusiñak, dual) on either side of the neck were a nearly ubiquitous feature of 19th century male parkas” (Burch 2006, 208). See Figure 6, for an illustration of a “Man’s Frock,” provided by John Murdoch, 1892.

30 Icy Cape is on the northwestern coast of Alaska between Point Lay and Wainwright.
image provided and the description of “boats hauled out and converted into houses” (Cantwell 1889, 72) creates an overall impression of the creation and use of temporary traveling *qazgit* in the 19th century.

![Figure 4](image_url)

**Figure 4.** Cantwell, John C. “Natives at Rendezvous Near Icy Cape, Alaska.” Image from plate 84 ff. “A Narrative Account of the Exploration of the Kowak River, Alaska” (Cantwell 1889).

This brief examination of how historic Inupiat traveled to many other locations for festivals and for trade, and how they created temporary *qazgit* spaces using materials at hand such as *umiat*, driftwood, and tarpaulins, provides insight into the creative mindset of practical people who brought their performative traditions with them wherever they went. These moveable *qazgit* became extensions of the home *qazgi*, a place of celebration with dance and music, and a place of teaching and learning with guests and trading partners. Like the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage in the present day, they brought their culture with them and practiced it...
in new locations. The Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage continue to travel to different venues to perform their music and dance, throughout Anchorage and in different parts of the state, where they inherently continue to practice elements of the home *qazgi*, as well as experience different issues that are in some ways related to each situation, as will be discussed in the next section.

3.2 Performance

The contemporary activities of the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage reflect the ancestral Kingikmiut ways as they travel to other performance venues near and far and gather to recreate their sense of *qazgi* as a presenting organization. While they may not have to recreate a physical space by overturning a boat in the present time, they create metaphorical spaces with their singing and dance performances that signify a sense of Kingikmiut culture. They celebrate events with the public through music and dance, and they continue to educate their audiences in Anchorage about issues such as authenticity and identity. By performing their cultural arts throughout an Americanized city that recently celebrated its centennial anniversary, the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage participate in “Indigenizing the City,” or making their presence known to the wider community. Semi-private events for Kingikmiut in Anchorage bring up issues related to spirituality. Through their travels to other locations in Alaska, the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage participate in a competitive dance festival, and a
cultural festival on ancestral grounds, where there are issues related to song
ownership, shared songs, changes in songs, nostalgia, and finding a sense of place.

In some ways, it can be argued that practice sessions and public performance
events both can be considered as types of performances. As discussed in chapter 2,
for the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage, the practice sessions at the
CITC are much more private affairs, even though visitors drop in from time to time to
watch, to visit with relatives and friends, and perhaps to participate in the music and
dance activities of the practice session. The group’s public performances have a
different feel than the regular Monday evening practice sessions. Oftentimes they are
kept to a shorter time limit, depending on the venue, audience, and intent. Depending
on the audience, the group leader may try to introduce a little history of the group’s
formation, explain some of the individual dance meanings, and answer questions
from audience members. The group’s participants generally wear “performance
clothing,” including matching ugilhaat or atigit, stylized overshirts that serve as
markers of identity, plus fancy footwear known as kamit or mukluks, made of bearded
seal hide soles and sealskin or reindeer fur uppers. The energy of the participants is
often directed, as they know they are being observed and perhaps judged by audience
members.

Ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino delineates “presentational performance” as
a specific type of performance where there is “one group of people (the artists)
providing music for another (the audience) in which there is pronounced artist-
audience separation within face-to-face situations” (Turino 2008, 51-52). This
description of a musical presentation is applicable to Inupiaq music and dance performances, up to a point. Typical public performances will include presentations of one or two “warm-up invitational dances,” followed by several motion dances that have specific choreographed moves coordinated with the songs and drum beats. Near the end of the presentation, typically the group asks the audience to participate in one or two “invitational dances.” “Invitationals” are dances accompanied by songs, usually presented with a steady drum beat, where audience members are invited to join in moving their bodies to the beat within a structured system (Kaeppler 2000, 117). Men are encouraged by the leader to stomp their feet and show off some arm muscles, while women are encouraged to bounce to the beat and gracefully wave their hands from left to right (see Chapter 2.5.1, *Invitational Dances*, for further discussion on “invitationals”). Turino differentiates “participatory performance” as a “restricted sense of actively contributing to the sound and motion of a musical event through dancing, singing, clapping, and playing musical instruments when each of these activities is considered integral to the performance” (Turino 2008, 28). However, Turino articulates that “in fully participatory occasions there are no artist-audience distinctions” (Turino 2008, 28). This instance may hold true for certain performance situations that the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage participate in, such as at the traditional Kingikmiut Dance Festival in Wales, Alaska, where most of the audience members are part of other Native dance groups, and often share and participate in many of the same motion dances and fully participate in each other’s group invitational dances. But for typical performances held in Anchorage, where the
audience is often composed of people from the wider community or tourists from all over the globe who know little to nothing about Inupiaq dance or music, the division between the presentation and the audience is much more distinctive throughout the majority of the presentation. In any case, Turino’s concept of “presentational performance” is appropriate to distinguish the activities of the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage that are different from practice sessions.

3.2.1 Performing in Anchorage

Throughout a typical year, the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage participate in performing their songs and dances in several public venues throughout Anchorage. While the services are not always regularly scheduled or guaranteed recurring engagements, the group may be invited to participate for a small compensatory fee by contracting organizations. Some of the established local venues where the group has performed in recent years have included the Alaska Native Heritage Center, the Alaska State Fair, and the Native Youth Olympics (NYO). There are other public performances that are one-time or trial events, such as invitations to provide opening ceremonial features at local and statewide conferences, to provide an Alaska Native presence at public events such as the Iditarod sled dog race ceremonial start, or at receptions for public hearings held throughout the city. I call these types of performances “pop-up” performances, and even extend the idea of the “pop-up qazgi,” as Kingikmiut carry on traditional activities before, during, and after performances held at various venues. Inspired by business lingo and computer jargon,
the idea of a “pop-up” suggests a temporary activity intended to bring a message to the viewer.\textsuperscript{31} In the case of the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage, I have heard group leader Greg Tungwenuk Nothstine say again and again something to the effect of, “by singing and dancing in Anchorage, we are saying to the world, ‘we are here, we exist.’” This message to the wider community is that Alaska Native peoples have cultures that are different than the mainstream American culture, and continue to practice their cultural ideas in Alaska’s largest urban environment. As urban Alaska Natives, Kingikmiut are practicing and promoting their cultural heritage throughout the city and engaging with local residents and visitors from all over the world. Through interaction with a variety of audiences, issues of tourism, identity and authenticity arise.

\textbf{3.2.2 Public Events}

A few times a year the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage may be invited to perform at the Alaska Native Heritage Center. The Heritage Center opened in 1999 as the premier cultural center of Alaska, a place for education, for interaction, for experiencing Alaska’s Indigenous cultures by residents and visitors alike. The Heritage Center is entirely conceived by and run by Native people, as a gathering place for passing knowledge from elders to younger generations, via school visits and after-school programs, summer internships for young adults, workshops for children.

\textsuperscript{31} See OED “pop-up,” n., definition 3: “A window that appears superimposed over the window being worked in or viewed, often containing a message;” and definition 6: “A shop or other business which opens quickly in a temporary location and is intended to operate for a short period of time” (“Pop-Up, N. and Adj.” 2016).
and adults in cultural arts of all types, and special programs and events. Several Alaska Native organizations hold their meetings in the space such as ANCSA regional corporations, the Alaska Native Studies Conference, and linguistics conferences focusing on Alaska Native languages. During the summer months, tourists who have joined cruise-ship package tours are brought in by the busload to experience Alaska Native cultures. The main “Gathering Place,” a circular stage area, is where staff, interns, and invited dance groups present dance performances, storytelling, and demonstrations of Native games for visitors on an hourly basis. Informative films are shown inside a smaller theater. In the “Hall of Cultures,” artists from around the state sell their wares and demonstrate their crafts amidst historical museum displays. Outside, visitors can enjoy tours of the campus, where they can experience traditional Indigenous-style dwellings based on typical styles from five regions of Alaska (Alaska Native Heritage Center Museum 2011). As scholar James Clifford noticed, “For tourists and other visitors with limited time, the Center provides a clear vision of Alaska Native presence and diversity” (Clifford 2004, 15). It is a one-stop introduction to Alaska’s diverse cultures, presented by real people who are practitioners of living cultures and young protégés who are learning on the job.

In addition to the regular staff and interns who provide many of the dance and Native games performance elements, the Alaska Native Heritage Center invites several other local dance groups to participate in providing samples of their cultural traditions for visitors. In recent years, the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of
Anchorage have been asked to perform at the Heritage Center in late August for a day or more, sometimes giving one or two performances per day or as many as four half-hour shows spaced throughout a day. On a typical morning, dance group members gather in one of the back offices or meeting rooms, where they change their street shoes for kamit, also known as mukluks, or fancy dance boots, and don their matching uğilhaat, ceremonial overshirts. If they hadn’t brought their own, the men each take command of a drum and a drumstick from the communal box or bag for instruments, brought in by one of the drum leaders. During this time, there is a fair amount of community chatter between individual members, and announcements made for the whole group. Between the women, there might be discussion regarding who made one’s kamit, or how to make them. Men might be talking about their latest fishing expeditions. One time the group members arrived at the Heritage Center an hour early because of a miscommunication between the contractor and the leader, and to pass the time, a very knowledgeable young man who grew up in Wales began telling oral histories he learned from his grandparents. Sitting in rapt attention, everyone listened, and even the elders paid careful attention and asked this young man to repeat parts of his stories, or asked about whom he learned the stories from.

32 UAF linguist Lawrence Kaplan points out that the word “mukluk” is not an Inupiaq word but a distillation of a Yup’ik word, “maklak,” applied by early Euro-Americans to most of Alaska (Kaplan 1984b, 134). Joe Senungetuk notes the same phenomenon, suggesting the Kingikmiut orthography kuhmik (singular) (J. E. Senungetuk 1982, 28).

33 Uğilhaaq (singular), uğilhaat (plural), is a word meaning “cloth,” or “overshirt,” from a dialect of Inupiaq spoken by Kingikmiut and other Inupiat from Seward Peninsula (Hanson 2015, 145; Bourdon 2016). In other Inupiaq dialects, one might hear the word atigi, atilkuk, or atikhuuraq (Inupiaq for “parka,” “parka cover,” “dress shirt” [see MacLean 2014]) or qaspek, also spelled kuspuk (Yup’ik dialect, a variant which was adopted by wider community in Alaska as standard in spoken English [see Carney 1997, 200]).
While this backstage part of the group’s events is not usually open to the public, in my opinion these moments are important extensions of the traditional purpose of the *qazgi*: storytelling and teaching (J. E. Senungetuk 1982, 50; MacLean 1986, 2; J. Wickersham 1902b, 223; Molly Lee and Reinhardt 2003, 108–10; Burch 2006, 105). Usually these moments of communication take place because of the extra time before or in between performances. This type of repartee does not usually happen during regular practice sessions because at that time there is more of an agenda of practicing songs and dance motions. The unexpected free time allows participants to connect to each other in different ways that often end up being educational, especially in regards to learning from the elders and from knowledgeable culture bearers. The added elements of meeting in a different environment and at a different time of day than the regular Monday night practice sessions and getting ready to perform for an audience all bring a sense of excitement or anticipation to the group, changing the dynamics of the group interactions.

At the appointed time, the group heads toward the “Gathering Place” stage, a circular area flanked on one side with floor-to-ceiling windows that provide a view of a large pond. The small raised stage is backed by an arched wooden panel that gives the feel of the inside of a traditional generic Alaska Native house made of logs hewn by hand (see Figure 5). The wooden panel is decorated with a large bas-relief carved map of Alaska that is painted with different colors representing each traditional regional homeland: Athabascan, Inupiat, Central Yup’ik and Cup’ik, Unanga̠x̱ and

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34 See also section 2.2, *Qazgi*: Community House, and section 2.6.1 Learning.
Figure 5. Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage perform at the Alaska Native Heritage Center. Photo by Heidi Senungetuk, April 2016.

Alutiiq, and Eyak, Haida, Tsimshian, and Tlingit cultures. This map is a helpful tool when talking with audiences who may be less familiar with Alaska Native cultures, as it can be used to point out the location of the group’s ancestral homelands. The dance group members set out several folding chairs in front of this backdrop, facing the audience, forming a semi-circle. The audience sits on the main floor in rows of wooden chairs engraved with the logo of the Alaska Native Heritage Center. While the open space of the Gathering Place allows visitors to come and go as they please, the audience seating area invites people to sit and stay and learn about living cultures
from people who practice it rather than looking solely at museum displays presented behind glass.

In some ways similar to a practice session, a typical presentational performance at the Alaska Native Heritage Center feels much more formal. This atmosphere might be attributed to what Turino calls the *genre frame*, in this case performing for a tourist audience. “Musicians must provide a performance that sustains the interest of an audience that is not participating in making the sound or dancing, and the audience has its own responsibility of granting more or less attention to the performance depending on the genre frame” (Turino 2008, 52). The dance group provides a set of songs and dances that lasts approximately thirty to forty-five minutes in length, interspersed with short explanations regarding song text and dance motion meanings, short stories and histories, information about the annual dance festival in Wales, and basic information about traditional clothing and drums, today made with more “modern” materials. The audience generally sits with rapt attention and adds applause at the ends of each song and dance. Toward the end of the set, one of the dance group leaders asks the audience if they have any questions, and then invites the audience to participate in an invitational dance after showing them appropriate moves for men and women. After the set is over, most of the members of the dance group exit the stage area through a stairway that leads to the back offices, while some participants walk through the audience to talk with people and answer further questions. I especially enjoy talking with visitors at this venue, as the audience
is made up of people who come from all over the world. I have met and talked with visitors from across North America, Europe, Asia, and South America.

3.2.2.1 Authenticity

This interaction with a public audience sometimes brings up interesting questions related to authenticity. For the most part, I feel that audiences are appreciative of the performances the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage provide at the Alaska Native Heritage Center. Their questions are genuine, and often are presented along the lines regarding the symbolism of our uğilhaat, why do we wear white gloves when we dance, what materials are drums made with, and how long have we lived and performed in Anchorage. Upon reflection, I have a sense that several of these questions repeat the ongoing nature of a culture of settler colonial philosophies, and the dance group’s current expression of performative arts may challenge some presupposed ideas of audience members. As scholar Trudy Nicks states, “As long as people in mainstream society think of Indian cultures as something that existed only in the past, and of Indian peoples as having no role in mainstream history and society, they will not be inclined to take seriously the aspirations of First Nations” (Nicks 1999, 313–14). To some people, being urban Inupiat, or more specifically, Inupiat living apart from our ancestral homeland, seems to disqualify the authenticity of the performance on the spot, as if living in Anchorage makes us forget our own cultural habits altogether. Using widely available cotton fabric instead of fur for ceremonial dance clothing, or synthetic drumhead material instead of walrus
stomach lining, seems to diminish our performance value for some visitors and they question our ways at each performance. Odawa artist Frank Ettawageshik had a similar sensitivity to experiences he had with tourists’ reactions to his family’s artwork, and he explains: “Any modification of old techniques or methods is considered less good, and any innovation is considered to be a symptom of the degeneration of the old culture” (Ettawageshik 1999, 28). It is as if Indigenous peoples are held to a standard developed in a previous century and not allowed to accept new ideas or methods in order to be considered “authentic.”

In her work, Yup’ik/Aleut scholar Alexis Celeste Bunten discusses the paradox of authenticity in regards to tourism in Native American communities. Citing John Urry’s idea of the “tourist gaze” (Urry 1992), Bunten suggests that tourists wield power over locals by giving preference to those who match their ideas of what is “authentically indigenous or ethnic” (Bunten 2013, 112). As tourists question our current choices of materials for regalia and instruments, and question our authenticity based on choices made to live in the city, they uphold negative stereotypes based on colonialized models of keeping Indigenous peoples stuck in the past. Citing Dean MacCannell’s idea of “reconstructing ethnicity” (MacCannell 1984), Bunten also points out that “Indigenous tourism workers may unconsciously internalize the West’s false images of them. In other words, in order to participate in the tourism market, Indigenous cultural tourism workers must become, to a degree, Westernized” (Bunten 2013, 112). However, utilizing the “host gaze,” locals participate in carefully orchestrating exchanges “in which the guest feels ‘safe’ around hosts with whom they
might normally feel uncomfortable” (Bunten 2010, 54). In a way, adapting the presentation of dance and music to a Euro-American stage and audience set-up rather than sitting in the round as an ancestral-style qazgi-style dance festival (see reference to Bernardi in section 2.2, Qazgi: Community House), is participating in “westernizing” the performance in order that the visitors might feel more comfortable in their reception of our performances.

The questions related to the choice of material used for instruments and the choice for urbanization has been considered elsewhere in this dissertation (see 2.4.6 Sounds of Drums—Drum Making, and 2.3 Community). In regards to the question of materials we use for ceremonial clothing, the answers usually have to do with practicality. The group sews their own uğilhaat using cotton cloth. This is not only more practical, as fur is harder to care for, but cloth is also much more affordable, portable, and replaceable as needed in the present day, with the prevalence of commercial fabric stores in Anchorage. However, as visitors notice, these specialized overshirts have sewn-in references to fancy dance parkas historically made with many kinds of fur. The men’s uğilhaat have two strips of contrasting fabric appliqued around the front of the shoulders, connected by a similarly colored piece that is applied over the top of the hood (see Figure 7). This style reflects the “roots” or “tusk-like extensions” that were often found on the hoods and shoulders of fancy fur parkas of the ancestors of the nineteenth century (Issenman 1997, 24; Murdoch 1892, 113-14; see image provided by Murdoch, Figure 6). Present-day women’s uğilhaat have much less pronounced “roots” where the hoods are attached, but maintain a
Figure 6. “Man’s frock.” Murdoch, John. Ethnological Results of the Point Barrow Expedition (1892, 113).

Figure 7. Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage. Photograph by Heidi Senungetuk, December 2016.
point at the end of the hood, which several of the elder women in the group testify represents the point of the mountain behind the village of Wales. The women’s uglilhaat also have skirts attached at the bottom, sometimes outlined with contrasting trim. In her dissertation, anthropologist Cyndy Martin attributes the introduction of the skirt on women’s atigit to the pressures of missionaries of the late nineteenth century, who wanted to be able to distinguish between genders at sight (C. B. Martin 2001, 127). Nowadays creativity rules far as uglilhaat, atikluk, or kuspuk styles abound around Alaska, but they usually have a hood, decorative trim, and pockets. The Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage try to maintain a somewhat uniform look in their performance uglilhaat, although there are variations within the group, depending on preference or availability of materials. Also, there is the case of Willie Topkok, an expert skin-sewer, who prefers to wear his intricately-beaded fancy dance parka made from furs to show his pride in his Inupiaq heritage and his advanced sewing skills.

In performance situations, the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage generally wear gloves while dancing. Tourist audiences often have questions regarding the use of gloves, as they see dancers putting them on before they step up to dance, regardless of the season or whether the performance is in an indoor or outdoor space. The women generally wear white gloves, although some of the younger women currently don fancy dance mitts made from sealskin or other hand-sewn furs. Several of the elder women have vintage white gloves that look like they were the height of American style in the 1940s (Winters 2016, 156). My feeling is that these
types of gloves had been worn at dance events in Wales in the 1940s and were
considered the best in fashion at about the time the dancing practice ceased. After the
practice of dancing was vitalized in the 1990s, the elder women brought out their
fancy gloves they had from those earlier times, and continue to dance with them in
the present era. Currently most of the young women and girls wear inexpensive white
knit gloves that are available at most department stores, as they do not have the
fancier type that the elder women don. The men keep several pairs of gloves on the
floor as “communal” gloves that anyone can take when they wish to dance—
otherwise they do not wear gloves while drumming. There are fancy gloves that are
hand-knit by one of the elder women, made with contrasting design stitches, or store-
bought gloves that look like gardening gloves, but are generally reserved for dancing.
Johnston notes that “mittens are invariably worn while dancing, reputedly as a sign of
respect for the ancient hunting spirits” (T. F. Johnston 1980, 370). People in the
Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage have said to audiences at the Alaska
Native Heritage Center that wearing gloves keeps one from touching someone else
inappropriately while dancing. I’ve also heard that covering the hands protects the
dancer from bad spirits entering the body through the palm of the hand. Ikuta reports
that her informants joked with her about making a big deal of the habit of wearing
gloves: “My collaborators complained that anthropologists often try to rationalise
unknown indigenous practices for outsiders, such as wearing gloves in Eskimo dance
performance” (Ikuta 2010, 162). Perhaps it is simply a custom to wear gloves, and
need not be analyzed so much.
3.2.2.2 Identity

The overall effect of the ceremonial clothing in dance performance seems to be much more important when the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage participate in public events where they engage with other Inupiaq dance groups. In the present era, the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage’s main color palette consists of a purple and teal. The women’s uǧilhaat are made with purple floral-print calico trimmed with white ric-rac (zig-zag braided trim) around the pocket and hem, and the women generally wear white gloves. The men’s uǧilhaat are made with teal calico, trimmed with dark blue appliques around the hood and shoulders and ric-rac around the pockets and bottom hem. This color palette serves as an indicator of identity when the group participates with other dance ensembles, such as at the Quyana Alaska dance celebration nights at the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) convention.

The evening dance festival at AFN, known as Quyana Alaska, is a chance for dance ensembles from across the state to share their performative cultures with each other and with the public. Quyana Alaska was introduced in 1982, more than fifteen years after the first AFN convention (Alaska Federation of Natives 2012b). In recent years the event has been broadcast on television and on the internet via livestream, making it available to audiences worldwide. There are usually seven to eight different ensembles presenting their music and dance each evening at Quyana Alaska, for a total of two nights during the annual Alaska Federation of Natives conference, whether held in Anchorage or Fairbanks in alternate years. When individual members
of a dance ensemble wear their performance regalia, it signifies their association with a certain group. At a convention such as Alaska Federation of Natives, where attendance averages 4,000 to 5,000 people from all regions of the state (Alaska Federation of Natives 2012a), the atigi or uğilhaat not only signify Inupiaq heritage but also ethnicity, as Martin suggests (C. B. Martin 2001, 216). In its basic form, the atigi or uğilhaaq allows one to identify as Inupiaq, rather than any of the multitude of cultures represented at AFN, such as Tlingit, Haida, Tsimshian, Yup’ik, Cup’ik, Unangaâx, Alutiiq, and multiple Athabascan nations. In 2015, the Kingikmiut Singers and Dancers of Anchorage participated in the Quyana Alaska celebration amidst thirteen other dance groups, including other Inupiaq ensembles. The color palette of purple and teal uğilhaat, mentioned above, allows participants and observers to quickly identify members of this group, and differentiate them from other Inupiaq ensembles. At the 2015 Quyana Alaska celebration at the Alaska Federation of Natives convention, other Inupiaq groups included the Barrow Dancers, the Tikiğaq Traditional Dancers of Point Hope, and the Anchorage Northern Lights Dancers, with each group expressing their own styles and colors through their atigi or uğilhaat. Over the years of attending larger dance festivals, one becomes familiar with each group’s style and color choices, and is able to recognize them at sight.

3.2.2.3 Indigenizing the City

The cultural performances at AFN’s Quyana Alaska, while open to the public, seem to cultivate an audience that is made up of a majority of Alaska Native
attendees. For me, being a participant with the Kingikmiut Singers and Dancers of Anchorage at the AFN convention in 2015 was one of the most exciting performances I have ever witnessed. Exhibiting one’s best skills as a singer and as a dancer in front of so many Alaska Native people is humbling, because this mostly Alaska Native audience is so much more knowledgeable than a tourist audience at the Alaska Native Heritage Center, which is made up of mostly visitors to Alaska. Knowing that there are dance groups from some villages that show more prowess and proficiency in their music and dance skills, this audience also understands the struggles of colonial pressures that influenced the cessation of cultural practices (see Chapter 1, Aipanitaq inülliq: Old Stories). As they participate in and witness Quyana Alaska over the years, the audience can see and appreciate that the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage has grown, both in numbers of participants, and in the quality of singing, drumming, and dancing, as do I.

Billed as the “largest representative annual gathering in the United States of any Native peoples,” the Alaska Federation of Natives convention has been held in Anchorage and in alternate years in Fairbanks, Alaska’s two largest urban centers (Alaska Federation of Natives 2012a). Since 2008, the new Dena’ina Civic and Convention Center, the largest conference facility in the state, has been the home of the AFN convention in Anchorage. During the week of AFN conventions in Anchorage, I have heard Alaska Native people referring to the Dena’ina Center as “The Qazgi” in casual conversation. To me, this signifies a general sense of “Indigenization” of a major downtown facility run by the city. They speak of the
modern, 200,000 square foot center as a traditional meeting-house, especially in light of the music and dance activities held during the evenings after the political and educational meetings held during the day. Quyana Alaska nights give participants a chance to enjoy a variety of Alaska’s performative cultural heritage, while meeting and visiting together, often coming together from different parts of the state.

The Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage also regularly participate in other public performance events in Anchorage area, and in the process, contribute to a sense of “Indigenizing the city,” or making Indigenous presence known in an Americanized space. Through the process of promoting their Inupiaq culture in this urban environment, they connect with the wider community in bringing a cultural element that may seem unfamiliar for many people of the wider community, and in doing so, create opportunities for understanding. In recent years, some of the regularly occurring public events in the Anchorage area include performances at the Alaska State Fair in Palmer and the Native Youth Olympics opening ceremonies. The Gathering Place at the Alaska State Fair was established in 2014 as a venue for Alaska Native peoples to share their performative cultures, to hold an Alaska Native Arts Market with vendor booths, including Native foods, and generally to be a place for reaching the public for education about Native cultures. In an interview with the Bristol Bay Times, the chair of The Gathering Place board of Directors, Tabetha Toloff states, "The overall goal is to bring a greater understanding of Alaska's indigenous cultures and traditions to Fair visitors, and to highlight the many traditions of Alaska Native people within a popular culture setting" (Bristol Bay Times Staff...
Loren Anderson, leader of the Sugpiaq dance group *Imamsuat*, corroborates Toloff’s intent. In regards to The Gathering Place at the Alaska State Fair, Anderson says, ““It just means a place where we can come and share our culture in a dedicated place…Every performance is an educating moment, and every time there’s an opportunity, we’ll take it” (Hickman 2016). Considering the Alaska State Fair in Palmer has been celebrated since 1936 (Alaska State Fair 2016), it has taken some time for the Alaska State Fair to embrace Alaska Native participation. Alaska State Fair general manager Ray Ritari confirms The Gathering Place’s mission in his statement: "It also supports our efforts to extend and expand our outreach efforts to rural Alaska communities and people to truly be Alaska's state fair” (Bristol Bay Times Staff 2014). Eager to reach out to Alaska’s wider community, Alaska Native dance groups, including Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage, are increasingly participating in urban events, as if to say, “we are here, we are not going away.”

In recent years, the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage have been participating in the opening ceremonies of the NYO Games, formerly known as Native Youth Olympic Games. NYO was originally conceived of in the early 1970s as a way for students from villages who were attending boarding school programs in Anchorage to connect with their home village cultures while living away from home for months at a time (Cook Inlet Tribal Council 2016). Based on traditional games that were often performed in ancestral-style *qazgit*, the games allow participants to develop and sharpen physical and mental skills and abilities necessary for traditional
modes of survival in Alaska. The NYO Games are open to all students enrolled in elementary (grades 1-6) or secondary (grades 7-12) school or in a GED program throughout Alaska, regardless of ethnic background and traditions. The annual statewide meet held in Anchorage is a chance for young athletes to prove themselves and to get to know athletes and mentors from other communities. The opening ceremonies for all the athletes, coaches, and visiting families and friends are replete with speeches, songs sung by the children of the Alaska Native Cultural Charter School, and include cultural performances such as that provided by the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage. Kingikmiut see this performance opportunity to serve as representatives performing Alaska Native culture in an urban setting, especially for young people attending from small villages who may be visiting Anchorage for their first time. They feel it is important to be positive role models for young athletes and possible future job seekers or future scholars who may attend university in Anchorage and wish to connect with a cultural heritage dance group at a later time.

In addition to the regular annual events, the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage receive invitations to perform for events around the Anchorage area as single engagements by a variety of different organizations throughout the city. Depending on the time of year, the dance group sometimes has requests for two or more performances per month, averaging about twenty-five to thirty events per year or more. In the past year, the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage have performed for fundraisers, for conferences, for sporting events, for public schools, for
civic events, for Native corporation annual meetings, for elder living homes, for craft bazaars held at the Alaska Native Medical Center, for social service gatherings, and special events such as student graduation ceremonies at schools and universities, among others. The act of assembling at various venues around the city constitutes the idea of the “pop-up qazgi:” a moveable traditional dance house created by people who carry out cultural activities based on the traditions of the ancestral home. The group maintains the sense of ilisaġvik, a place of learning, as they teach their audiences about their traditional culture, and show how they adapt it to the urban setting. By bringing living traditions to public venues throughout Anchorage, Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage are participating in raising public awareness of Indigenous peoples’ cultures in the city. They are emphasizing a claim to Indigenous rights they feel they are due, as First Peoples of the land, and as citizens of the United States to practice their culture as they see fit.

3.2.3 Semi-Private Events

The Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage hold two annual events that are semi-private in nature. The dance group serves as host, entertainment, and clean-up crew for Inupiaq people with ancestral ties to the Seward Peninsula and their families who live in or are visiting the Anchorage area for the holidays, in two parties: the Christmas Party and the New Year’s Eve Party. The dance group recognizes a Christian holiday with a celebration that includes food, conversation, dance, games, and gifts, and a gathering that promotes a safe place to welcome the
New Year without the need for alcohol, but marked with food, dance, and games. In recent years, the annual Christmas Party and New Year’s Eve party have been held at the Alaska Native Lutheran Church in Anchorage. Individual participants of the dance group have associations with the church, and thus are able to secure use of the space each year. The church space is suitable for the dance group holiday parties, as it has a central location and ample parking space. The large meeting space in the lower level has a kitchen area in the back, allowing for the preparation of foods for the gathering. There is an upper balcony surrounding part of the large meeting area, where people can stand to take pictures or videos of the dance performances. On occasion I have heard discussion about changing the venue to accommodate more attendees, but they have kept with this space in the absence of finding a more appropriate location. Often there are approximately fifty to a hundred guests, most with connections to Wales, through birth, marriage, or other family relations.

For both holiday events, the evening begins with a potluck style dinner. The participants of the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage prepare main dishes, such as reindeer stew, salmon, turkey, and ham, and side dishes including traditional foods such as muktuk (whale skin and blubber) and agutuk, which is a mixture of berries and whipped reindeer tallow. The table is filled in with extras such as fried chicken, vegetable dishes, potatoes, and desserts. Before people line up to partake, a prayer is spoken, usually by an elder, and usually in Inupiaq language first, then in English. A blessing is given over the food, thanks given over the preceding year, and well-being wished on everyone for the coming year. Elders are always
given the honor of being first in line to partake of the food, followed by everyone else.

Immediately after the meal, the tables are moved aside in preparation of Inupiaq dancing. A long row of chairs is set up against the far wall. Wearing their fancy dance uġilhaat and kamit, the men assemble in the center of the row of chairs. The elder women take seats next to them, and the younger women and children stand to the sides. One of the leaders makes an announcement that the celebration is in recognition of the support to the dance group given by the community and a chance to reconnect with fellow Kingikmiut friends and family. The drum leader guides the group through every song and dance they know. As usual, the drummer starts each song, and as soon as the other singers and drummers have recognition of it, they join in. Dancers decide whether or not to perform the dance motions in public on a voluntary basis. This venue does not have a strict time limit, and, because it is their “home” performance space, they get to decide how many dances to feature, and how many times to repeat each song. These two performance events are for themselves, rather than for tourists, for the wider community, or for other dance groups.

3.2.3.1 Spirituality

These holiday events have a different essence than public performance events discussed earlier, as the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage are dancing for themselves and for their peers. As noted above in section 3.2.2 Public Events, many public performances in Anchorage have become partly associated with
educating the public about the group’s Kingikmiut culture and their right to practice
their way of life. But these semi-private performances in Anchorage reflect a different
aspect, as they are not out to prove anything to the public, but they are performing
music for their own enjoyment and for that of their family and friends. It is evident
from the intent of the celebrations centered around Christian holidays that traditional
dance and music, as Thomas Johnston states, “are not necessarily dissonant with
Christianity” (T. F. Johnston 1977, 68). In light of the suppression of traditional
music and dance brought by missionaries and educators in the name of Christianity,
they have come to co-exist in the present. Johnston notes that “Today [dance] is more
secularized, and also appears to have assumed political meaning” (T. F. Johnston
1977, 58). I suggest, as does Johnston, the present representation of dance and music
has a connection to ancient spiritual factors of pre-Christian times: “The ancestor's
proprietary dance is of the past but belongs to the future; it is performed by humans
but is for the spirits” (T. F. Johnston 1991, 60). The current connection to the
ancestors is through the act of performing traditional dance and music, just as the
ancestors did.

Indeed, there are oral-history and historic accounts of Inupiaq belief in and
use of music and dance to reach the spirit world, which give us a window into pre-
Christian times. Oquilluk, writing in the 1970s, introduces aŋatktuŋ in his memoir
People of Kauwerak: 35

35 The widely used term “shaman” comes from the Tungus-speaking Evenki and Even of central
Siberia, and was adapted by early Russian explorers (Laufer 1917; Anawalt 2014, 10). I prefer to use
the Inupiaq word aŋatkuq (singular), or aŋatktuŋ (plural) (with different spelling variations as they
Before the missionaries came to Alaska, the Eskimo people believed in spirits. There were many different kinds of spirits and they had great power that certain people could use if they could talk to them. One kind of spirit belonged to a dead person. Another kind belonged to the animals and other things in nature. There were lots of each kind of these spirits. After the Second Disaster, when Beeueoak discovered the first spirits from the bones of the man and woman who drowned in the flooding time, many others learned to use the spirits; and more and more spirits were found in the Eskimo lands. People learned that special songs and dances made the spirits happy and they would help people who knew those things. Only certain people could talk to the spirits and bring them to places where they could be used. These people were called by the Kauwerak people aungutguhks and shamishes. (Oquilluk 1973, 115–16)

Oquilluk devotes an entire chapter to describing some of the works of aŋatkut, both good and bad, mysterious and banal, acting alone and in concert with another aŋatkuq. The aŋatkuq’s association with the drum is evident in most stories, as the drum was a vehicle to access the spirit world. Oquilluk reminds the reader that he speaks of first hand experience of seeing their magical acts, and some of his immediate family were gifted as aŋatkut (Oquilluk 1973, 131). He admits that people began to believe in the words of the missionaries, but also warns that the elders spoke about the return of the aŋatkut in the future. “Those I knew said the aungutguhks will disappear, but they will be back” (Oquilluk 1973, 132).

In his memoir, Harrison Thornton corroborates Oquilluk’s description of aŋatkut. Thornton devotes a short chapter to “unutkoots,” in which he writes:

The Eskimo physicians are called unutkoots. They are supposed to have some occult means of communicating with the spirit-world and some power or influence over good and evil spirits. They seem to rely more upon their magic than upon any real knowledge as to the causes

appear in literature) that is still in use today, when referring to people who are considered healers or have superpowers (MacLean 2014, 38).
of disease and the elimination of said causes...The people tell some remarkable stories by way of illustrating the supernatural powers of their witch-doctors. (H. R. Thornton 1931, 101)

Thornton notices the association of the drum with the activities of the *añatku*: “All of these maneuvers were interspersed with drumming and a kind of singing incantation—the stick, the drum, and the singing being inseparable adjuncts of every *unutkoot* performance” (H. R. Thornton 1931, 103). Thornton counted the presence of eight *añatku* in Wales in the early 1890s, but also drew attention to the fact that *añatku* came to him for advice when they were ailing (H. R. Thornton 1931, 104).

The presence of a permanent mission house and school brought about major changes to the community, with new ideas about spirituality. Thornton was one of the first teachers in northwest Alaska hired by Sheldon Jackson, General Agent of Education for Alaska, who was also a Presbyterian minister. According to scholar Shari Hudadorf (also discussed earlier in Chapter 1.2 American Influences), one of the goals of Christian education, as imparted via mission schools, was to achieve a more homogeneous population as a foundation for national unity. This idea was important in the eyes of the government, which had just recently purchased the territory of Alaska from Russia in 1867, and had little idea about the people who came with the land (Huhndorf 2009, 36). Milton Gaither suggests that the merging of missionary work with government aid in the name of educating Native Americans in the nineteenth century was born of the popular idea of social Darwinism, in which Alaska Natives were viewed as the most backward groups of people that needed the most education, especially in regards to morality (Gaither 2006, 60). The music of the
people, as an extension of the *ayatkut*, was an obvious target for eradication for a moral populous.

Ernest Burch suggests the process of Christianizing Inupiat of northwest Alaska came about quickly, over the course of one generation or so in the very end of the nineteenth century. Burch suggests that most Inupiat were convinced about the new religion by other Inupiat, rather than by the missionaries who brought the message (Burch 1994b, 82). The timing proved conducive for conversion after much destruction of their main economic and sustaining resource, bowhead whale and walrus populations, by American Yankee whalers since the mid-1800s. The American whalers also brought new diseases to the region, which in turn resulted in a decimated human population (Naske and Slotnick 1979, 196). By providing medical help that the *ayatkut* could not address, missionaries undermined the credibility of the *ayatkut* (Burch 1994b, 92). In addition, Burch suggests Inupiat were able to incorporate the new religion side-by-side with their own traditional beliefs, as theirs was a “nonexclusive” worldview (Burch 1994b, 94). They could maintain their traditional beliefs while simultaneously accepting the newly introduced religious ideas.

In a book about her grandfather, editor Eileen Norbert discusses a similar issue about the adoption of Christianity at the turn of the last century. Her grandfather, Charles Menadelook, was born in Wales in 1892, and became one of the first Inupiaq schoolteachers. Norbert writes:

By the time Menadelook was born, his parents and grandparents had adopted Christianity, but they continued their Inupiat spiritual customs. Kokituk practiced his shaman rituals. The Inupiat were a practical people and adopted new ways when it was necessary or made
life easier for them. They did not see any conflict with keeping their old beliefs and customs; they just added new ones. Menadelook followed their example and did the same throughout his life. (Norbert 2016, 21)

Menadelook and his father, Kokituk, could see that with the influx of Euro-American people that came in with the phenomena of the American whaling industry, the recent gold rush in Nome, and even the new missionary school in their town, things were changing. Adapting new ideas was a practical way to cope with changing times, and adding a new belief system into their lives must have seemed manageable.

In his memoir, Joe Senungetuk writes about merging the old ways with new ideas. “I cannot see why Shamanism could not also be modernized and ‘merged’ into the life of the modern Eskimo” (J. E. Senungetuk 1982, 84). This ability to hold more than one concept at a time shows a perspective that is highly egalitarian in nature—rather than taking an “all-or-nothing” approach, Inupiat are able to bring in new ideas and adapt them as they see fit. Burch recognizes how Inupiaq peoples have Indigenized this new religion, taking aspects of it and viewing them through traditional lenses, often to the point of consternation of many missionaries: “Most of the early missionaries realized that the first converts had adopted an ‘Eskimoized’ version of Christianity…the early White missionaries were alternately distressed, amused, and touched” (Burch 1994, 98-99). Rather than dismiss Christianity altogether, though, Inupiat made it their own, Indigenizing it as they did with so many other ideas.

Still, as religion and philosophy professor Kristin Helweg Hansen writes, there is tension between the two systems of belief, even today. Helweg Hansen
introduces her book *Alaska Native (Iñupiaq) Translations and Transformations of Protestant Beliefs and Practices* (Hanson 2015, 1-2) with an anecdote about an Alaska Native parent of a child who was attending a private Christian school in Anchorage where she was serving as an administrator. The parent was worried about sending the child to a Native dance tour and conference with the other students, because she was afraid that the Native dancing would interfere with the Christian values that the school taught. Juggling ideas of “knowing who you are” and “keeping the culture alive,” Hanson recommended the parent allow the child to learn from attending the tour and conference, which may be viewed as a complete turn-around from school policies from over half a century ago. But the fact that the parent was still conflicted enough to seek guidance from an authority from the school shows that at times there are still tensions between ideologies, especially in regards to the spiritual aspect of music and dance. That Hanson chose to relate a story about Native dance as the prompt for her study, even though the study is not about music and dance but rather about the Indigenization of Christianity in Anchorage churches, shows how Native music and dance can still be an agent of friction when paired with religious settings.

Back in Anchorage at the Kingikmiut Christmas Party, the dancing continues each year in the church setting. A lot of songs are attributed to ancestors, and the continuation of performing these songs keeps the ancestors’ spirits alive in the present. One song in particular stands out for me, personally, as a connection with my ancestor. *Inuaghluuum attutah* is a song attributed to Inuaghluu. I first started
learning the dance motions in the summer of 2012, at a regular Monday evening
dance practice at the CITC office building, from our elder Cecilia, with Roy leading
the singers, and Jessica, my cousin helping me with the dance motions. In my field
notes, I described the situation:

Finally we got to a song I barely know. Cecilia starts yelling out loud.
“This is a song for you and Jessica! You two need to learn it and dance
it as a solo. It is your great-great-great-grandmother’s song! It is a
generation song. You need to do it as a solo.” I sat down and wrote in
my notebook: Enoongowuk’s song. Roy starts singing it again, and
Jessica is up there with one of her girls. I got up right away and
followed as best I could. I have tried it before, but never really paid
attention to this one. Cecilia was in her chair doing the motions with
us, but all the others in the room were watching. I felt so on the spot!
Practice with humility. Afterward, Stephanie started reminding me to
keep my hands curved, rather than pointy, to be graceful. Everyone is
helping. Be thankful. At the end of practice, Richard said: “Wow, you
have a song now. That’s pretty special.” I replied, “I have to practice
that one for sure.” (Field notes, June 25, 2012)

Since that time, I have learned a little better how to sing the song and dance the
motions, and how to spell Inuaghluuk’s name. The lecture from our elder teacher felt
so important that day that I had to write it down as quickly as I could. Now, when I
get to perform this dance for other people, I feel like the spirit of my ancestor is
singing through me and dancing through me, and that the audience is not looking at
me, but instead is witnessing my great-great-great-grandmother directly. I am just a
body with which the spirit of Inuaghluuk can perform her song.

This kind of connection to the spirits of the ancestors is very important for
many Inupiat. Before Euro-American influences, the history of the people was an oral
tradition, often passed from generation to generation through song and dance.
However, so much information about the ancestors was lost during hard times. My
grandmother and grandfather were orphaned as children due to an influenza epidemic (J. E. Senungetuk 1982, 12; Sven D. Haakanson, Jr. 2016, 27), like so many others in Wales and around the world in 1918 (see Greist 1961, Chapter III, page 1). Later, as I was growing up, my father worked for the University of Alaska, and I rarely got to visit and learn from my grandparents, who lived in Nome at the time. These types of life situations create a sense of disconnect with the past. I feel I know so little about my family tree before my grandparents’ time, but singing and dancing help to connect me with the spirit of my great-great-great-grandmother. And because of the presence of other Kingikmiut, dancing it at the Kingikmiut holiday parties seems to have more importance than a public performance for tourists or for the wider community. I am like a scribe, but as a dancer, I embody the history and the spirit of my ancestor, as a historian.

3.3 Traveling to perform

Traveling to perform Inupiaq music and dance allows the individual participants of the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage to connect to each other and to maintain connections with dance groups of other communities. In an essay titled “Traveling Traditions” (D. Kingston 2001), Ugiuvangmiut Inupiaq scholar Deanna Kingston suggests a way of conceiving of this sense of interconnectedness between Ugiuvangmiut Inupiat, even though they might be living in different places. Citing Ulf Hannerz’s idea of the global ecumene, Kingston demonstrates how Ugiuvangmiut living in Nome, Anchorage, and Oregon maintain
connections with each other through various technology, but also through face-to-face interactions, such as traveling to perform at dance performances and annual festivals (D. Kingston 2001, 244). Similarly, Kingikmiut develop a sense of interconnectedness with each other and with other dance groups through the act of travel to dance festivals, where they deepen their relationships through singing and dancing.

The Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage enjoy traveling together as a group to participate in festivals in other locations in the state. There are two festivals in locations other than the Anchorage area that they have been participating in regularly in recent years—the World Eskimo-Indian Olympics (WEIO) festival in Fairbanks, and the Kingikmiut Dance Festival in Wales. Dance and music as a competitive event is an element of the WEIO festival, while the main objective of the Kingikmiut Dance Festival is sharing cultures. Through travel to these festivals, the Anchorage-based group maintains its relationships with family and friends in a larger Alaska Native community, where issues of song ownership and sharing come to the surface, incorporating issues of changes in songs and dances. The nostalgia for the ancestral homeland is a driving force for the group’s existence. Finally, the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage connect with a sense of place at the Kingikmiut Dance Festival in Wales.
3.3.1 Fairbanks—WEIO: Competition Element

Wien Air pilot Frank Whaley started WEIO in 1961 as a part of the city of Fairbanks’ Golden Days Celebration, after spending time in Point Hope and witnessing the Native games played in that community (WEIO 2007; Tognetti-Stuff 2006). Originally called the World Eskimo Olympics, the title was amended in 1971 to communicate the diversity of cultures in Alaska (Tognetti-Stuff 2006; Giles 2015, 10–11). The festival is a showcase for traditional Alaska Native games, arts, storytelling, talent, and dance. The highlight of the festival, the games, allow athletes a chance to display agility, endurance, and strength, while encouraging participants to learn about and practice elements of their ancestors’ ways of life. Popular games include the seal hop, the four-man-carry, the one-foot high kick, the two-foot high kick, and the Alaskan high kick, and the nalukataq, or blanket toss. Each game has a purpose, usually related to survival in harsh Arctic conditions or developing hunting skills. In the seal hop, also called knuckle hop, the participant assumes a push-up position and hops using only the knuckles and toes touching the floor, imitating a seal climbing onto the ice (Kelley and Lund 1986, 105). The seemingly infinite variations on the high kick stem from ancient signaling systems, where a small stuffed sealskin ball is suspended from a pole, and the participant must kick the ball using one foot, two feet, or holding on to one foot with a hand, landing in the same manner (Kelley and Lund 1986, 103–7). The nalukataq, or blanket toss, is difficult to practice outside of a festival, as it requires many strong blanket pullers for each participant who gets tossed in the air. The pullers (usually the strongest men) coordinate their pulls in
order to toss the participant as high as thirty to forty feet in the air. Participants are
judged on style, height, and landing (Kelley and Lund 1986, 99–100). In addition to
the games, other competitions are held, such as for the Miss WEIO talent/scholarship
contest, the muktuk eating contest, the seal butchering contest, a baby regalia contest,
and others. Participants join the festival from all over the state and from Canada and
Greenland.

Indigenous dance groups can participate in WEIO in competitive or non-
competitive (also called “demonstration”) categories. Each participating group gets
twenty minutes on the center stage to show their best dancing, drumming, and
singing. The competition component awards first, second and third place awards in
categories for “Eskimo” (Inupiaq and Yup’ik cultures) and “Indian” (numerous
Athabascan or Southeast Alaska cultures) styles. Dance groups are scheduled
throughout the evenings in between other athletic events during the four nights of the
festival. An evening may be host to two to four different dance groups, depending on
the total number of group entries. A panel of judges selected from knowledgeable
elders representing several dance styles rates each group based on traditional style,
regalia, timing, and audience popularity. The winning dance group in each category
gets a repeat performance on the last night of the festival, as an honor dance, and a
trophy presented at center stage. This highly formalized dance competition is
uncommon among the festivals in Alaska, such as the Alaska Federation of Natives
Quyana Alaska celebrations or at the Alaska State Fair Gathering Place, where
individual participants may envision competitive elements, but they are not explicitly judged.

In recent years the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage have been participating in the World Eskimo-Indian Olympics festival in Fairbanks. During some festivals, they have participated as demonstration participants, and others, as a competitive dance team. In 2011 they participated as a competitive team, and took third place, and in 2012 and 2013 they place second. Placement offered a sense of achievement during those years when they competed. Even though there are often only two or three dance groups participating in the competitive element, the process of being judged gives the dance group the satisfaction of coming to an understanding where they stand among groups that are often much more skillful. Also, this festival attracts dance groups that come from all over the state, and the groups participating varies from year to year, most often due to the economics of travel for a group. The regular participation by the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage allows them to test their mettle against a variety of dance groups, including those from Wainwright, Utqiagvik, Anaktuvuk Pass, and Fairbanks. As one participant reports in *Heartbeat: World Eskimo Indian Olympics*: “‘At the Olympics,’ Barrow dancer Mike Jeffery says, ‘not only do you display the prowess of your dancing, you serve as representative of your community and you meet other representatives from other communities’” (Kelley and Lund 1986, 91).

Kingston, citing Fienup-Riordan, suggests competitive dancing has been an essential part of Indigenous dance in Alaska, as a way of avoiding physical conflict.

Substituting artistic expression for bows and arrows, or in the present day, more insidious weapons, dance and music are acceptable vehicles to determine status. Drawing attention to a finer line between competition and cooperation, Robert Spencer notes the rivalries inherent between visiting communities at a Messenger Feast, from the foot races down to the compliments lavished on hosts (Spencer 1959, 159). However, the competition had to fit in within a standard expectation of good-natured cooperation. Developing this sense of cooperation was extremely important for whaling crews, as they achieved unification through dance and music. “Not only did such a hunting group cooperate in the hunt itself, each man taking his proper place and performing to task for which he was best qualified, but there was agreement on social and ceremonial activities in which a crew engaged” (Spencer 1959, 163). Thus, competition had a purpose: to unify a crew, but also to encourage cooperation between groups.

In addition to participation in the actual competition event at WEIO, the camaraderie developed during travel and four days spent together at the festival allow the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage to deepen the sense of interconnectedness within the group, and with other Alaska Natives from other parts of the state. Travel from Anchorage to Fairbanks can take seven to eight hours by car, as the distance is over three hundred and sixty miles. Dance group participants often
carpool, sharing expenses, conversation, and meals while enjoying some of Alaska’s best scenery along the George Parks highway. When they arrive in Fairbanks, participants also have a chance to visit with family and friends who either live in the Fairbanks area or are visiting from other villages for the purpose of attending the festival. One Kingikmiut family that lives in Fairbanks often opens their home to dance group participants for a meal of traditional Kingikmiut foods, including muktuk, dried fish with seal oil, and agutuk. Some Anchorage Kingikmiut dance group participants are also athletes and participate in the athletic events, and some young women in the group have participated in the Miss WEIO talent competition, while some members are artists and participate in the craft tables where they demonstrate and sell their wares. The entire festival gives people a chance to deepen connections with members of the group and with other Indigenous peoples of Alaska and the Arctic in general. A participant shared her opinion in Heartbeat: “I always look forward to WEIO because it is a time of sharing and gathering and seeing relatives from other villages,” Marty Ipalook says. ‘It’s so special seeing people from all over at the games” (Kelley and Lund 1986, 91).

3.3.2 Wales—Kingikmiut Dance Festival

The highlight of the year for the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage is to visit the Native Village of Wales for the purpose of participating in their annual Kingikmiut Dance Festival. The Kingikmiut Dance Festival was revived in 2000, fifty-nine years since the last kivĝik or Messenger Feast (Village of Wales
IRA and Williams 2004, 1:39). Winton Weyapuk, Jr., a Wales elder and festival organizer, reports that the first year of the revival of the festival “was kind of small,” with visiting dance groups from Anchorage (Kingikmiut), King Island, Diomede, and Brevig Mission (Village of Wales IRA and Williams 2004, 2:04). As a vehicle for building a sense of interconnectedness between communities that are separated in space, the recurring festival allows the sense of a larger Inupiaq community that regroups every year. The travel and experiences spent together in Wales as a group provides yet another opportunity for members to build relationships with each other outside of regular practice sessions.

In recent years the Kingikmiut Dance Festival has been held during the Labor Day weekend in late August or early September, although it was held earlier in the summer in past years. The people of the Native Village of Wales do a fair amount of grant applications and fundraising to offer travel assistance for several groups to attend the festival each year. They are able to charter a plane using Bering Air to fly groups back and forth from Nome to Wales on a Beechcraft 1900D twin-turbine airliner that can carry nineteen passengers. The Anchorage Kingikmiut group and other visiting dance groups are responsible for providing their own travel to Nome.\(^{36}\) Since Nome is “off the road system,”\(^{37}\) travel between Anchorage and Nome must be achieved by regular jet air service by Alaska Air for the Anchorage dance group. The Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage meets their costs through fees paid for

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\(^{36}\)Kingikmiut Dancers of Anchorage must provide all or most of the cost from Anchorage to Nome, depending on the success of grants and fundraising from Wales and the overall cost of the festival.

\(^{37}\)The main highway system in Alaska connects Anchorage to Fairbanks and Valdez. Many of Alaska’s villages are only accessible by air.
performances in the Anchorage area and other fundraising efforts as needed. The Kingikmiut Dancers of Anchorage must choose nineteen participants to attend the festival each year. Usually more than nineteen people show interest during the months preceding the festival, but by the week of the festival, there is some sorting due to illness or other unforeseen circumstances that may prevent some individuals from traveling and allow others to attend in their place. In recent years, priority has been given to the elders who wish to travel to Wales, followed by a selection of an even number of men and women singers.

Upon arrival in Wales, the members of the dance group find their accommodations. Since the village has no hotel, dance groups are assigned to stay *en masse* in the church, in the “Multi,” or in the school library or classrooms. Participants bring their own sleeping bags and mats, and are prepared to camp out with other dance group members on the floor. In a town that has an average population of less than two hundred people, inviting five to six dance groups or more nearly doubles the usual number of people, and may seem like an inundation, but everyone expects and understands the situation. The town has no restaurant, so meals are prepared in the school cafeteria kitchen/gymnasium for all visitors. Once the first evening’s meal is finished, many people participate in clean-up of the gymnasium in order that the dancing may begin.

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38 Some individual participants opt to pay for their own flights outside of the charter, and join the group in Wales. Current regularly priced tickets from Nome to Wales can cost upwards of $500, and flights from Anchorage to Nome usually cost about $350, for a total round-trip cost from Anchorage of $850 or more (depending on market prices).

39 The village’s “Multi-purpose building” houses the city offices, IRA council tribal office, bingo hall, and acts as a default airport waiting area.
For three nights, each visiting dance group and the host dance group, the Wales Kingikmiut Dancers, gets a chance to share their expertise on the dance floor. The dance floor is the Wales school gymnasium, the acting modern qazgi in the village. Three rows of bleachers are supplemented with a number of padded folding chairs set out as more comfortable seating for the elders. The performing dance group gets two rows of folding chairs facing the bleachers, one row for the drummers and one for the singers behind them. The dancers fill the floor space with their energy. Each dance group spends about forty-five minutes to an hour performing their best songs and dances. It is standard practice to allow for invitational dances at the beginning and at the end of each set. The floor gets filled with people, all moving to the beat of the drums, sharing their joy in participating in one of the utmost Inupiaq experiences together. In between dance groups there are sessions of formalized trading in the form of drawing raffle tickets for gifts, with highly prized gifts of computers, sewing machines, televisions, and binoculars, and occasionally a traditionally-made item such as an ulu, a woman’s cutting knife, or a hand-carved walrus ivory bracelet.

Dancing at the Kingikmiut Dance Festival goes late into the night every night. It is especially true on the last night of the festival, when there seems to be an unspoken competition to see how late they can keep drumming. After each group has had their turn on floor, the drummers from all the groups form a single large circle around the perimeter inside the gymnasium and start singing and drumming all of the shared songs they know for as long as they can proceed. In the past few years they
have succeeded in surpassing sunrise. From his point of view, ethnomusicologist Thomas Johnston attributes this “asymmetrical concept of time” due to extreme daylight hours in northern environments (T. F. Johnston 1975, 5). That theory may not hold true considering the timing of the Kingikmiut Dance Festival, held in early September, when there are nearly equal hours of sunlight and darkness. Perhaps the practice of drumming all night recalls an earlier era, as suggested by an eyewitness account. In 1912, Suzanne Bernardi described preparations for a whale hunt, including the men who danced in the qazgi for twenty-four consecutive hours before launching their umiat (Fair 2003, 374; Bernardi 1912, 1). As part of the current dance festival activities, the event of all-night drumming feels more like hanging on to the sense of interconnectedness between Inupiaq groups for as long as possible before they split up for another year.

3.3.2.1 Ownership of Songs

The idea of ownership of songs is an old one that goes back into Inupiaq oral tradition. In an essay regarding Inupiaq trading during the period 1816 to 1881, Burch asserts that “some songs were in general use, but others—particularly magic songs—were strictly private property” (Burch, Jr. 2013, 90). Songs and dances are not considered public property, but are composed and considered owned by the composer or the dance group associated with the composer, unless they are traded or gifted to another individual or group. Norbert summarizes the system of using permissions in her tribute to her grandfather, Charles Menadelook: “Elders had elaborate dances,
each dance owned and ‘patented’ by those who created them. Anyone or any group wanting to use patented songs or dances had to get permission from the owners” (Norbert 2016, 25). The unwarranted use of songs and dances without permission may result in tensions between individuals or between dance groups. Helweg Hanson reports the likeness to modern copyright laws: “The region or family thereby asserted ownership of that song or dance, and a performer had to obtain owner permission before any use. (One Iñupiaq participant compared the Iñupiaq conventions to modern copyright and intellectual property laws)” (Hanson 2015, 303). A group’s use of songs that are created and owned by another dance group is particularly shameful at a dance festival where the creators/owners are there to witness improper performances of a song. At the Kingikmiut Dance Festival, I have heard discussion led by elders of different dance groups regarding the improper performance of songs. One elder from another dance group sat me down at the Kingikmiut Dance Festival and gave me a lecture about the impropriety of stealing songs, and especially singing them “the wrong way” if one learns it improperly (field notes, September 1, 2011). Since that time I have heard other members of the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage have heard the same lecture from the same elder, revealing his method of one-on-one lessons, as well as his distaste for song-stealing, and possibly a semi-disguised direct request for our group to cease our performance of a song that he considers one of their own.
In an article written in the 1970s, ethnomusicologist Thomas Johnston notes the existence of the practice of stealing songs, and indeed the use of technology to assist in learning songs belonging to other dance groups:

The teams make a special point of learning the sayuan songs and motions of their rivals, from immigrants to their home village or from cassette recordings and observation. Most teams are inclined to resent this musical borrowing, calling it song-stealing, particularly when the song borrowers are paid money to perform regularly for tourists, and use the acquired repertory for this despised—by other Eskimos—purpose. (T. F. Johnston 1976c, 10)

Johnston’s idea that “song-stealing” becomes most abhorrent in the process of mixing dance with tourism for economic gain is interesting, but presently more uncommon, as I have not heard talk about it in this negative manner. It is a refined point that Johnston brings up, where unsuspecting tourists might not know about the difference in the ownership of songs, and the “borrowers” may benefit from having an expanded repertoire without giving proper credit where it is due. Perhaps in the forty years since Johnston’s article, tourism may have become more widely accepted and practiced as an economic aspect of music and dance, but the custom of resentment about stealing songs owned by one group still arises at festivals.

3.3.2.2 Shared Songs

On the other side of the idea of song ownership is the idea of song sharing or trading. Oquilluk, who learned oral history from his ancestors when he was a child, devotes a section of his memoir to describe trade fairs, where people gathered from afar to trade goods, dance with each other, and trade songs and dances. He writes:
The Eskimos used to go trading among themselves. They would gather at what is called Point Spencer now. They would come from all over with their things. This happened every year in Naloseivick (August). They stayed until the trading was over... There was always a big dancing time when everybody was ready to go home. This was lots of fun and people saw different kinds of dances. Sometimes they learned dances and songs from other people. They sometimes used these later when they visited other places. The Siberians danced, too, but they sure liked to watch those Eskimo men. (Oquilluk 1973, 101–2)

Oquilluk’s testimony shows how people gathered for annual trade fairs, and included dance and music as a trade item, using them as currency later to reinforce trade relationships. Point Spencer is in the Port Clarence region, near Teller, and a likely place for a gathering of several villages, and even visitors from the Siberian side of the Bering Strait, as Oquilluk indicates.

Deanna Kingston notes that “songs were also traded between communities” (D. M. Kingston 2000, 45). In her article regarding trade across the Bering Strait, Kingston traces several songs practiced by the King Island Dancers of Nome that have their origins in Siberia. Similar to Oquilluk’s testimony, Kingston notes that trading songs was a way to prove the existence of trade relationships between communities (D. M. Kingston 2000, 47). Susan Fair brings up the idea of songs and dances first as a proper method of greeting one another, then received as gifts: “In this context, dance became an ephemeral gift—one based on pleasing the senses while alluding to many other cultural issues, as well as an accompaniment to the offering of material things” (Fair 2000, 468). She adds in a footnote that one of her informants, Charles Lucier, points out that “dance was a gift only if ‘given’ to a friend, taught it to another, and then received public acknowledgment of the gift and/or debt to the
giver” (Fair 2000, 487, fn 6). The public acknowledgment of the gifting of songs remains of the utmost importance today, and the lack of it is perhaps what causes much friction between groups.

However, in a book about the World Eskimo-Indian Olympics festival in Fairbanks, Annabel Lund suggests a confusion about ownership of songs due to a longstanding tradition of exchanging songs: “There is much exchange of songs, particularly in Eskimo music. Most Inupiat performers think dance groups should use only their own village’s songs and dances during competitions like WEIO. But there are also disagreements about which village owns which song” (Kelley and Lund 1986, 76). I have seen some songs, such as the song the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage call “Iya Iya,” or another song they call “Uncle Sam,” performed by dance groups from Anchorage to Utqiaġvik and even by a dance group from Canada. I have heard that “Iya Iya” is attributed to the village of Point Hope, and “Uncle Sam” to Diomede, but this announcement is usually only made in Anchorage, as during village festivals, announcements are generally kept to a minimum. This difference in communication could be contributing to a modern sense of confusion about song ownership, but also allows for shared dance performances at festivals. At a village festival, if people in the audience know a song, they will get up and dance it with the performing group. At times, the floor is crowded with different dance versions of the same song. I find this practice exciting to witness, as it reveals a sharing tradition that reaches across the state and across international borders.
There are dance group leaders who have professed more accepting attitudes about sharing songs. Ernie Frankson, a Point Hope dancer, drummer, and singer, used to visit the Kingikmiut Dance Festival with his dance group before he passed away in 2016. He spent hours teaching during afternoon sessions at the festival. There he was especially interested in sharing songs that had originated in Wales, were shared to Point Hope in previous generations, and kept alive by Point Hope dancers during the decades Kingikmiut ceased dancing. He was returning the songs to Kingikmiut of Wales and Anchorage. In 1977 Thomas Johnston recorded three songs, as performed by young Ernie Frankson and his grandparents, Dinah and David Frankson of Point Hope, that originated from the Cape Prince of Wales, as presented in the video *Iñupiat Dance Songs* (T. Johnston and Wassillie 1977) and in the accompanying book *Iñupiat Aġġisit Atuutiŋich: Iñupiat Dance Songs* (T. F. Johnston et al. 1979). Ernie Frankson continued to mentor younger generations of singers and dancers throughout his life. His attitude was open to sharing, and he felt honored when other groups performed his group’s songs. “Ernie Frankson says he doesn’t mind other dance groups borrowing Point Hope songs. ‘I think it’s great. I’m honored that they have chosen to use our songs. It shows they are good songs’” (Kelley and Lund 1986, 76). Attitudes regarding song ownership and sharing songs to other dance groups vary by groups and by individual musicians and dancers.
3.3.2.3 Changes

What happens as a result of sharing songs in different communities? Kingston notices differences in the performances of the Nome-based King Island Dancers, the Anchorage King Island Dancers, and the King Island group that was practicing and performing in Oregon where she was going to graduate school: “No matter how true to the local form we have tried to be, this change in context, particularly performing for a non-Native audience, has given rise to changes in the King Island dances we perform” (D. Kingston 2001, 246). Kingston demonstrates her idea with examples of how the Oregon dance group interacts differently with an audience: they end up narrating their history and explaining the stories behind the songs and the dance movements, “so that the audience could appreciate our performances” (D. Kingston 2001, 247). The King Island Dancers of Nome see no need to explain their culture to a local audience that knows their stories, and thus their performance has a different feel to it. The Oregon dance group developed their own style of dance performance, one that differs from the “home” dance group, but is appropriate for their new context in the Lower 48 states.

Similarly, the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage have developed their own style in a city separate from its ancestral community of Wales. It is particularly noticeable when attending the Kingikmiut Dance Festival in Wales, when

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40 The King Island community relocated off the island in the late 1950s. The Bureau of Indian Affairs closed the only school, a tuberculosis epidemic led people in search of better healthcare resources, and the U.S. Government’s Indian Relocation Act make up some of the major causes that drew people away from their ancestral homeland of King Island. They created a King Island community within Nome, while others moved further away to other locations (D. Kingston and Marino 2010, 122).
the “home” dance group, the Wales Kingikmiut Dancers, performs the same repertoire, but with a different twist. The first time I attended the Kingikmiut Dance Festival after having joined the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage, I noticed that the Wales Kingikmiut Dancers use slight different rhythms in certain songs. I attributed this difference to the fact that we had different elders teaching our groups. In Wales, at the time (in 2011) they had elders Faye Ongtowasruk and Pete Sereadlook leading their dance group (H. Anungazuk 2010, 119), and in Anchorage, we have had Cecilia Nunooruk Smith teaching us. These three elders are from the same generation, and they are all from Wales, but Cecilia moved away, lived on the Kenai Peninsula, and after her husband passed away, she moved to Wasilla, a community outside of Anchorage. A difference in leadership provides different interpretations of the same songs. Instead of drawing attention to who may be “right” or “wrong” in their interpretation, I see a similarity to the seemingly infinite number of interpretations of a classical symphony: for instance, there are hundreds, if not thousands, of recorded interpretations of Beethoven’s Symphony Number 5, Opus 67, as directed by different leaders. Individual leaders may reinterpret a single work in a different way over time, as well, as they change their views. I see a similar phenomena happening between the Wales Kingikmiut Dancers and the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage: the leadership determines much about the performance style of a group. Rather than becoming points of contention, the differences might be celebrated as tributes to the leaders.

41 Faye Ongtowasruk has since passed away.
3.3.2.4 Nostalgia

For members of the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage, the sense of nostalgia seems to be an important driver in attendance and participation in the Kingikmiut Dance Festival. I have witnessed an expression of a sense of nostalgia for the ancestral homeland among many Kingikmiut who live in places other than Wales. For instance, at the last Kingikmiut Christmas Party in Anchorage, in casual conversation, one elder woman who grew up in Wales but now lives in the Anchorage area, spoke emphatically about her longing to return “home,” intending her beloved Native Village of Wales. Her verbal stress on the word “home” indicated nostalgia for a simpler way of life, in a village with a population of under two hundred people at most. This attitude may be expected from an elder who grew up in Wales, as one who experienced the traditional way of life, including foods, community, and sense of history. However, what is more surprising is hearing the same sort of sentiment from people who grew up in locations outside of Wales, but still maintain this nostalgia for what they also call “home.” Even though they have never lived in Wales, this (often younger) generation longs to at least visit Wales to experience the place of their ancestors, if not more specifically to experience dancing and making music in the place of their ancestors.

Attendance at the Kingikmiut Dance Festival can be eye-opening for many young Kingikmiut who have never visited the land of their ancestors. In 2011 I attended the Kingikmiut Dance Festival with my cousin Jessica. An avid participant
in the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage, Jessica had never been to Wales up until that time. Near the end of the second day of the festival, she said, “Things are starting to make sense now.” Her statement was a realization of her grandmother’s childhood home, and a commencement of understanding of the stories she had heard from her grandmother about Wales. Just by experiencing the size of the village, the feel of the community, the landscape of the rocky mountains falling into the ocean, and the experience of picking berries on the tundra with cousins gave her a different outlook on her ancestry, the songs we sing, the dance motions that go with them, and how we connect with this place as Kingikmiut.

This “inherited nostalgia” (Maghbouleh 2010) among second-generation (and later) Kingikmiut reveals itself in the dance and music of the Kingikmiut. Many of the songs the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage perform have a sense of nostalgia or longing for the past ways of Kingikmiut life. There are songs depicting ancient ways of harvesting food: Ahluighaneak (“Picking Sourdocks”), Ice Fishing for Flounders, Reindeer (Harvest), and Seal Hunter. There are songs portraying household chores, done in the old ways: Igloo Building and Khishuuq (Wood Chopping). There are songs that tell oral histories from times past: Utenaghook (also referred to as “Good-Bye”), Red Light District (“Lady Dance”), and Aluanah (also referred to as “Oh Holia”). In the current era, the dance group hangs on to these ancestral songs, and composes only a few new songs. This nostalgic attitude persists, even though there are suggestions from early eyewitness accounts that Inupiat of earlier times continually renewed their song repertoire and discarded songs they
considered to be old-fashioned. Explorer Laura Boulton reports from her travels to Utqiaġvik in 1946: “There were many dance songs but they were composed, flourished temporarily, and often died within a year or two, much like our own popular music” (Boulton 1969, 390). For the people who live in Anchorage, the lifestyle is fairly different from that of their ancestors: for instance, processes of harvesting wild foods have, for the most part, been replaced with hunting for sales in grocery stores. But the nostalgia for niġipiaq, “real food,” especially food that comes “from home,” persists, along with the songs that portray the making of those foods or the harvesting necessary to make those foods. We have a few songs that reflect more “modern” times, such as Alaska Airlines and a newer song the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage composed, called the “Float Coat” song (see section 2.6.2, Composing). As suggested by anthropologist Nina Glick Schiller, this nostalgia that plays out in this longing to return to the homeland and in the music and dance itself is a way of invoking a shared past, to “bridge the chasms of time, space, generation, and dramatically different daily experiences that divide them” (Schiller 2005, 162).

3.3.2.5 Constructing a Sense of Place

A local dance festival brings representative dance groups together from several different villages, or Inupiaq nations (Burch 2006, 7). Each village has its own style and repertoire of Inupiaq songs and dances that sets them apart as being from a certain place. Therefore, Kingikmiut have a particular repertoire that connects them to the place of Kingigin, even considering the presence of shared or trade songs between
villages that reveal the existence of trade relationships (see 3.3.2.2 Shared Songs). As ethnomusicologist Martin Stokes suggests, “music is socially meaningful not entirely but largely because it provides means by which people recognize identities and places, and the boundaries which separate them” (Stokes 1994, 5). The songs and dances have great meaning for the people involved in a festival such as the Kingikmiut Dance Festival, because it is done in such a way that they recognize each other as distinct Native nations. They are able to assert their own identity in a way that connects with their ancestral homeland, and with other Inupiaq nations that send dance groups as representatives to the festival.

For the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage, the act of singing and dancing the music of Kingigin is a chance to reconnect with the place, which also means the people of their ancestors. As Dorothy Jean Ray suggests, the connection of the people to the place is built into the language: “When the Eskimo political system was in effect, a village was rarely called by the site name alone, but always with [the word ending] ‘-miut,’ so that it actually referred to a social conglomerate of persons who considered the place to be their principal home but who traveled widely at different times of the year” (Ray 1975, 106). The place was made known by its people, and the people of Kingigin had a reputation as having the best dance houses. As oral history suggests, Wales was once known as a community with one of the strongest dance cultures in the region (M. D. P. Williams 1996, 424). Dorothy Jean Ray found reports by Captain Henry Trollope of the supply ship Rattlesnake, from when he visited the Cape Prince of Wales in 1854, where he describes Wales as “a
sort of capital in these parts and has four dancing houses, which is a very expressive manner of estimating the extent and population of a place” (Ray 1975, 149).

Reconnecting with the place of their ancestors allows participants of the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage to bring their music and dance to a deeper level of understanding about their songs, as well as about their relations and themselves. For Kingikmiut who have chosen to live in an urban environment, coming to Wales every year allows them a chance to find their roots, especially if they have never lived in a village. By visiting with relatives and the place of their ancestors, participants of the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage construct a sense of rootedness in a place that has a feel of the ancestors and of ancient times.

The presentational and partially participatory performance activities of the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage bring the group to many different performance venues throughout the Anchorage area and to other regions of the state of Alaska, including Fairbanks and the Native Village of Wales. In the process of inhabiting each of these performance spaces, the participants create a sense of a temporary qazgi, or community house, where they continue to practice music and dance while simultaneously connecting to the ways of the ancestors. They negotiate issues of authenticity and identity while “Indigenizing” the city, or making their presence known in the urban center of Anchorage. They continue to negotiate issues of spirituality in combination with dance and music, as they celebrate Christian and American holidays with Inupiaq dance and music each year. Entering into a
competitive component of a statewide Alaska Native festival allows for the
expression of ancestral methods of determining status and building a sense of
interconnectedness with Indigenous peoples from other regions. Attendance at the
Wales Kingikmiut Dance Festival is a way in which Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers
of Anchorage participate in song ownership and exchange, and witness changes in
songs due to variants in leadership. The nostalgia for “home” that drives the dance
group’s continuation year after year helps root the participants to a sense of place in
the world. As a group that is continually on the move for their performances, they
take on a sense of nomadism with a sense of purpose: to embody the work, play, and
spirit of the ancestors in a moveable qazgi.
**Puviqlealuq: Tail, Coda**

Today, Sophie Tungwenuk Nothstine continues to lead the way for young people as an elder in the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage. At regular practice sessions, always wearing her colorful uġilhaaq, she continually encourages the younger women and girls, and young men and boys, for that matter, to participate in singing and dancing with the group. Sophie is almost always present and active at the group’s performances around the Anchorage area and travels with the group to participate in the festivals they attend in Fairbanks and Wales. When requested, Sophie leads blessings or prayers, usually using her Kingikmiut dialect of the Inupiaq language first, followed by an explanation in English for those who are learning the language. As a grandmother and great-grandmother, Sophie joined the latest movement among Inuit women of adorning their chins with kakiñiit, or traditional hand-poked tattoos (Tahbone 2016; Bedard 2015; Getty 2016), a practice of beautification and identity that was discouraged or banned by the influence of mission schools (Deter-Wolf et al. 2016, 19). As if to say, “we are no longer invisible,” by donning her kakiñiq and colorful uġilhaaq, by speaking her prayers in Inupiaq language, and by practicing and performing dance and music in the Kingikmiut way, Sophie is demonstrating the process of becoming **Inupiaq**, “a real person.”

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42 As a way of connecting to my great-grandfather, whose name was Puviqlealuq, my father, Ron Senungetuk, was given the name Puviqlealuq, a name that translates as “end part of the tail.” Classical musicians may be familiar with the term **coda**, an Italian word that also means “tail,” indicating the concluding passage of a work.
Inspired by one of Sophie’s prayers, I embarked on a journey of finding out how the music and dance and the present activities of the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage relate to the work and ways of the ancestors. In Chapter 1, I began to uncover the oral histories of Inupiat as presented by Oquilluk, Kazingnuk, and Menadelook regarding dance and music as they witnessed it before colonizing influences suppressed performative arts. A century of eyewitness accounts presented by government officials and missionary schoolteachers and others reveals some of the stresses Inupiat had to endure, including propaganda that encouraged Inupiat to tear down their qazgit, the community centers where dance celebrations often took place. Other stresses, including unfair legislation, epidemic diseases, and new education policies that took young people away from their families had their weary effects on cultural knowledge in the greater part of the twentieth century, influencing the practice of Kingikmiut music and dance to cease, or perhaps “go to sleep,” at midcentury for decades. The Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage exists as a countermeasure to the destructive colonizing influences, as a way to reset Inupiaq ways of being and continually reassert our existence and identity in a positive manner.

In Chapter 2, I examined the practice sessions of the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage. They hold their weekly practices in a lobby or meeting room of an urban office building in mid-town Anchorage, their improvised version of the traditional qazgi. In this “home qazgi,” they create a sense of community for Kingikmiut who have moved to Anchorage from Kingigin, and for descendants of
Kingikmiut and their families. In Alaska’s largest Americanized urban center, they have carved out a Native space to practice singing and dancing in the Kingikmiut way, where they recall and continue to practice methods of Kingikmiut education, composition, making instruments, and making sounds. The sounds they make represent an Inupiaq acoustemology, embracing the community in an egalitarian manner rather than by exclusivity. The dances embody their oral histories, spirituality, and creativity, and reveal their relationship to their ancestral homeland, Kingigin.

In Chapter 3, I explored the idea of the “moveable qazgi,” based on ancestral forms of travel and celebration at regional trade fairs and dance festivals. The Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage take their songs and dances and perform them in venues all around the Anchorage area, creating pockets of qazgi wherever they go. They educate tourist audiences as well as the general public of Anchorage about their performative arts and heritage, thereby maintaining a traditional culture that colonizing influences could not extinguish. They hold celebratory events for themselves and other Kingikmiut in the Anchorage area, recalling ancient spiritual aspects of dance and music while simultaneously embracing aspects of Christianity. The Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage travel to Fairbanks for the statewide WEIO festival, where they participate in the formalized competitive dance element, recalling ancestral ways of solving inter-village conflicts through dance and music. At the Wales Kingikmiut Dance Festival, the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage develop a sense of
interconnectedness with relatives and friends of the Wales Kingikmiut Dancers and other dance groups that visit Wales for the festival. Most importantly, Kingikmiut who live in Anchorage get a chance to sing and dance and to reconnect with the people and the place of their ancestors, Kingigin.

For the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage, keeping the Wales dance and music culture alive in Anchorage is due in large part to the vision and the work of the elders. Sophie Nothstine and her son, Greg Nothstine, with his cousin Richard Atuk, were instrumental in getting the group started in the early 1990s, and they have kept the practice alive for more than a quarter of a century. Elders Cecilia Nunooruk Smith, Ruth Agnabooguk Koenig, and Reba Dickson remembered and taught many of the songs they learned long ago in Wales, and they helped create the atmosphere of a traditional qazgi in the city. Roy Roberts has lead the group through many practice sessions and performances with agility and steadfast knowledge developed through years of participation. With their help and encouragement, many families in Anchorage have been able to practice Kingikmiut dance and music and learn about Kingikmiut culture. Practicing the ways of the ancestors in the time of the present insures that the ancestors of the future will maintain their sense of interconnectedness with Inupiaq ways of being.

**Greater Qazgi Movement**

In 1986 linguist Edna Ahgeak MacLean presented her idea of the revitalization of the qazgi in a paper titled “The Revitalization of the Qargi, the
Traditional Community House, as an Educational Unit of the Inupiat Community,”
given at the Alaska Anthropological Association meeting (MacLean 1986). Her
vision to institute a community-driven place for teaching and learning was very
important in that it inspired generations of Inupiat to claim their cultural heritage. She
conceived of a modern-day physical space dedicated to the institutional activities of
Inupiat in the style of a traditional qazgi:

The physical layout of the modern day qargi can be as traditional or as
modern as the Inupiat desire, as long as the people are comfortable in
it. Depending on the size of the community, the qargi may be one
room or a multi-room structure, but there should always be a large
central room where Inupiat dances and competition games can be held.
The large central room can also be used to build boats and sleds or
other large items. It may also be used for community feasts held
during Thanksgiving and Christmas. As the qargi serves also as a
community center, its educational function will be integrated into the
life of the village. (MacLean 1986, 3–4)

While I greatly admire MacLean’s work over the years, and without intending any
disrespect, I suggest that Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage, and other
dance groups throughout the Anchorage area, are practicing the vitalization of the
qazgi, but without the dedicated physical structure. As Eileen Norbert suggests,
Kingikmiut are practical people, and adopt new ways when necessary, or when it
makes life easier for them (Norbert 2016, 21). The habit of gathering as a group in an
office building lobby as a “home qazgi” for a space to practice, and creating a sense
of a “pop-up” or “moveable qazgit” around the Anchorage area, allows the
Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage to develop their skills as performers,
as well as maintain their community and their cultural presence in Alaska’s largest
urban center. I wonder how (and if) a permanent qazgi structure would change the
visibility and accessibility of the group in Anchorage, as their public performance schedule takes them to a variety of venues throughout the area, which allows them to interact with diverse audiences and with other dance groups, and therefore is an important part of educating the wider community about Inupiaq culture.

While music and dance may only be one facet of MacLean’s vision for a qazgi vitalization project, there are other “pop-up qazgit” in and around Anchorage that address other aspects of Inupiaq education. The İñupiaraąġvik Kisaġviŋmi (Anchorage İñupiaq Language Group), with much support from Edna MacLean, meets regularly for teaching and encouraging Inupiaq language to anyone who is interested. The Alaska Native Heritage Center operates after-school programs for young people to practice competitive Native games, Native art, and Native dance (Alaska Native Heritage Center Museum 2011). They also offer several adult sewing and beading classes and drum making classes, and other hands-on activities where the participants learn traditional methods as passed along by the ancestors. Kristin Helweg Hanson’s book Alaska Native (İñupiaq) Translations and Transformations of Protestant Beliefs and Practices (Hanson 2015) explores spirituality as practiced by two different Inupiaq churches in the Anchorage area. The University of Alaska Anchorage offers a minor in Alaska Native Studies that is open to all students, offering foci in Alaska Native languages and Alaska Native politics. The UAA also maintains various programs that support Alaska Native and Native American students on campus, such as the Cama-i Room and the Alaska Native and Rural Outreach Program. These are just a few examples of different aspects of qazgi life that people
are practicing in different spaces in Anchorage. Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage are taking part in a larger qazgi vitalization movement, taking place in moveable qazgit throughout the Anchorage area.

**Future Research**

My investigation into the music and dance practice and performance of an Inupiaq dance group in Anchorage has revealed that there is room for expansion in further research. In order to conduct this investigation, I limited my analysis to the activities of one urban dance group, the Kingikmiut Dancers and Singers of Anchorage. Currently, there are approximately fifteen Alaska Native or American Indian dance groups that practice in the Anchorage area, with cultural representation from all parts of the state and Canada and the Lower 48 states. These dance groups include, but are not limited to: Anchorage Northern Lights Dancers (Inupiaq), Kíšaqvigmiut Traditional Dancers (Inupiaq), Sivuqaq St Lawrence Island Dancers (St. Lawrence Island Yupik), Acilquq Dancers (Yup’ik), Lepquinm Gumilgit Gagoadim Tsimshian Dancers (Tsimshian), Eklutna Id’a’Ina K’eljeshna Dancers (Dena’ina), and the Anchorage Unangax̂ Dancers (Unangax̂). My hope is that this thesis will draw attention to research possibilities so that scholars will begin to engage with cultures represented within urban areas, and within other regions of the state, as each dance group brings their own worldview into their dance and music practice in its own way. While I appreciate the observations about Inupiaq music and dance made by scholars who hail from other parts of the world, such as Thomas
Johnston, and those scholars who suggest employing ideas such as “alliance studies,” as per Beverly Diamond (Diamond 2007), I would like to see further research presented with Indigenous viewpoints, to gain deeper understanding from the people themselves. Dangeli’s dissertation (Dangeli 2015) explores Indigenous expressions of music and dance in an urban setting in Canada, and Perea’s dissertation (J. B. Perea 2011) examines ways in which Alaska Native musicians extend traditional songs and dance into “musical modernities” on the world music scene. Aside from these works there is little current research by Indigenous scholars into the many diverse Native cultures that are active in Anchorage and throughout Alaskan communities. There is much work to be completed to communicate the significance of Alaska Native music and dance in all of its variations.

For decades I have been interested in exploring how Inupiaq music and dance relate to performative arts of the entire Arctic region. I have been inspired by a visual art show of 1993 called “Arts from the Arctic” (R. Senungetuk et al. 1993), a multi-national exhibit that sought to “present arts of the Arctic to all of its regions and to other people in the world” (R. Senungetuk et al. 1993, 7). The original concept for this show came from a group of Sámi artists who suggested that Indigenous peoples from the Arctic regions see the world in a way that is different from peoples of other parts of the world, and yet similar to each other, due to Arctic conditions, even considering different languages, political systems, and distances between regions. I was lucky enough to travel with my parents to Yakutsk, Sakha Republic, Russia, for the opening of the art exhibit in that region, and in those early days I began to see
cultural relationships across Arctic regions with our Alaska Native traditions. While much larger in scope than this dissertation, a study in music and dance across Arctic regions still intrigues me. I began to compile a bibliography of works related to Indigenous music and dance in Arctic regions, published as an annotated bibliography as “Indigenous Musics of the Arctic” (H. A. Senungetuk 2017). For three semesters I taught the course “Music of Alaska Natives and Indigenous Peoples of Northern Regions” at the University of Alaska Anchorage, a class that introduces students to regional music and dance practices of Indigenous peoples of Alaska, Canada, Greenland, Sápmi, and Russia, using short articles by a variety of scholars. I have wished for additional works to share with students that show greater depth in research, such as *Yupiit Yuraryarait: Yup’ik Ways of Dancing* (Fienup-Riordan, John, and Barker 2010), and only see a need for further scholarship in regional studies of performative arts of the Arctic.

Research in Alaska Native music and dance serves to show the world about the richness of our Indigenous cultures. I am frequently surprised by questions arising from people of the wider community who have spent their lives in Alaska yet know so little about Alaska’s First Peoples, although I am less surprised (but no less disheartened) by similar questions from Americans from other parts of the country who are perhaps unfamiliar with cultures of their northernmost state. My hope is that wider recognition of Alaska Native cultural practices, beginning in academia, will bring understanding to other realms that directly involve and affect Alaska Native peoples, such as economic development and public policy. The future for younger
scholars looks bright as they take up the responsibility of not only continuing to sustain the practice of the music and dance set in motion by our ancestors, but also in communicating with others about the importance of our cultural arts. By sharing aspects of our performative arts, we can begin to show the complexities and significance of Inupiaq knowledge and ways of being.
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