

The background of the cover is a vibrant, hand-drawn illustration. It depicts a rugged landscape with several mountain peaks. Some peaks are covered in green vegetation, while others are brown or grey. Several figures are scattered throughout the scene: one figure stands on a peak holding a long staff or spear; another figure is visible on a distant peak; a third figure is positioned near a large, flowing waterfall in the lower center; and a fourth figure is on the right side, near a body of water. The style is expressive and artistic, using a variety of colors including blues, greens, browns, and greys, with bold black outlines for the figures and peaks.

TEACHER RESOURCE GUIDE
FOR GRADES 9–12

LEARN ABOUT

COMMUNITY & LAND STEWARDSHIP

through the art of

PITSEOLAK ASHOONA

ART CANADA INSTITUTE | INSTITUT DE L'ART CANADIEN

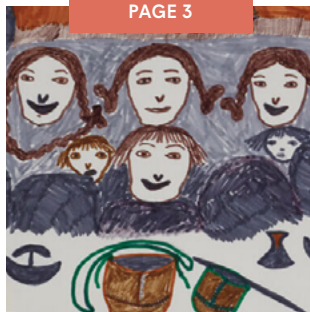
TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGE 1



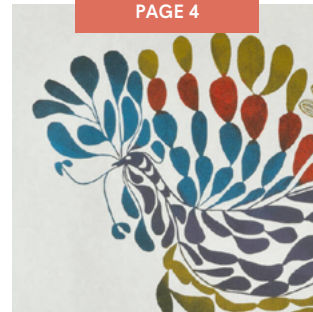
RESOURCE OVERVIEW

PAGE 3



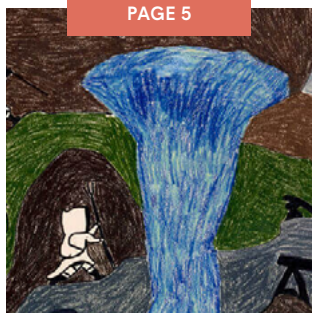
WHO WAS PITSEOLAK ASHOONA?

PAGE 4



TIMELINE OF HISTORICAL EVENTS AND ARTIST'S LIFE

PAGE 5



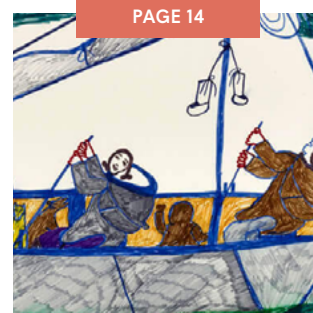
LEARNING ACTIVITIES

PAGE 11



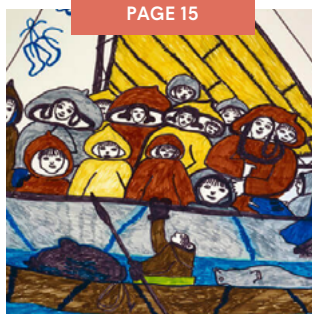
CULMINATING TASK

PAGE 14



HOW PITSEOLAK ASHOONA MADE ART: STYLE & TECHNIQUE

PAGE 15



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

READ ONLINE



PITSEOLAK ASHOONA: LIFE & WORK BY CHRISTINE LALONDE

DOWNLOAD



PITSEOLAK ASHOONA IMAGE FILE

RESOURCE OVERVIEW

This teacher resource guide has been designed to complement the Art Canada Institute online art book [Pitseolak Ashoona: Life & Work](#) by Christine Lalonde. The artworks within this guide and images required for the learning activities and culminating task can be found in the [Pitseolak Ashoona Image File](#) provided.

Pitseolak Ashoona (c.1904–1983) was a trailblazing figure in the world of modern Inuit art. She is part of the groundbreaking first generation of Inuit artists to produce drawings and prints through the establishment of the West Baffin Eskimo Co-op in Kinngait (Cape Dorset) in the 1950s. Her understanding of art as a form of personal expression and communication has resonated with artists for generations. Pitseolak Ashoona's oeuvre includes over eight thousand original drawings depicting life in Qikiqtaaluk (Baffin Island) and requires viewers to consider the artist's experience and worldview, including the themes of community and respect for the land. This guide asks students to develop a deeper understanding and appreciation for Inuit cultural and spiritual values, and to consider the importance of community and land stewardship through the work of this influential twentieth-century artist.

Curriculum Connections

- Grades 9–12 First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies

Themes

- Community awareness
- Connections between land and community
- Intercultural dialogue and understanding
- Inuit principles of knowledge

Teaching Exercises

The activities in this guide encourage students to explore the Inuit principles of knowledge and understandings of land and community as represented in artworks by Pitseolak Ashoona. They also ask students to consider their own communities and to critically examine sources of information about Inuit by both Inuit and non-Inuit media sources.

- Learning Activity #1: Exploring Understandings of Community through Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit Principles ([page 5](#))
- Learning Activity #2: Lay of the Land: Understanding Land Stewardship and Inuksuit ([page 9](#))
- Culminating Task: Building Intercultural Knowledge and Understanding ([page 11](#))



Fig 1. Pitseolak Ashoona, *Untitled (Birds Flying Overhead)*, c.1966–67. Here Pitseolak shows a solitary woman reaching her arms towards birds in the sky.

A Note on Using This Guide

This guide starts by introducing students to Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit to acknowledge and respect the cultural specificity of Inuit approaches to knowledge building and acquisition, skills, relationships, policies, and beliefs. As such, a handout has been included in this guide ([on page 16](#)) to ensure these principles remain central in students' approaches to each activity.

In Learning Activity 2 ([on page 9](#)), students are invited to learn about the inuksuk. This is a culturally specific creation that has unfortunately been culturally appropriated in many different contexts. Respecting the cultural specificity and function of these Inuit stone structures should be prioritized, and teachers should have this in mind when showing images of Inuksuit (plural).

Teachers should note that the colonial term “Eskimo” appears in this guide in the context of the 1960s. Teachers should alert students to the colonial roots of this term when it comes up, and should communicate to them that the term “Inuit”, the term the people have always named themselves, is now used in English.

Lastly, and importantly, teaching about Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, and teaching through the work of Pitseolak Ashoona, is an act of reconciliation and must be done with care. More specifically, it takes up the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action #63 (iii): “Building student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect.” Keep this in mind when guiding students through the learning activities in this guide.

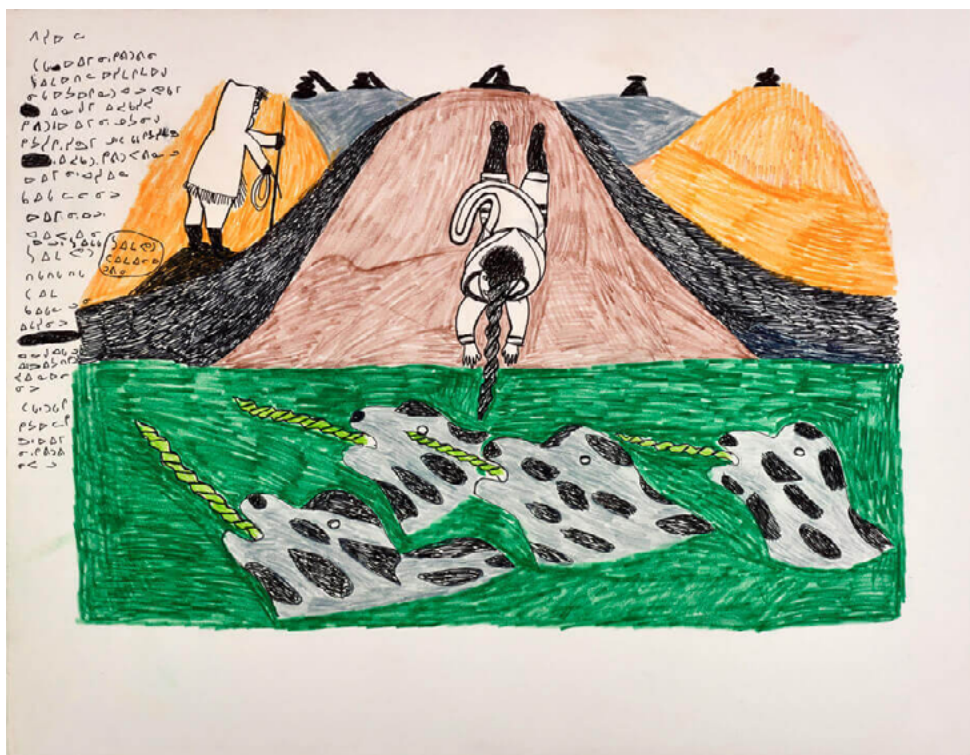


Fig 2. Pitseolak Ashoona, *Untitled*, 1976. In the legend illustrated here, a woman dives into the sea and transforms into a narwhal.

WHO WAS PITSEOLAK ASHOONA?



Fig 3. Pitseolak Ashoona in Kinngait, 1968.

Pitseolak was born to her parents Ottochie and Timungiak on the southeast coast of Tujakjuak (Nottingham Island) sometime between 1904 and 1908. In her early childhood, Pitseolak travelled great distances to camps along the southern coast of Qikiqtaaluk (Baffin Island). She eventually spent extended periods of time around the Foxe Peninsula on Baffin Island around 1913 with the arrival of a Hudson's Bay Company trading post there. She married Ashoona in 1922 or 1923.

After her husband's death (sometime in the mid-1940s), Pitseolak and her children settled in Kinngait (Cape Dorset). The development of an arts and crafts industry there in the 1950s and 1960s was instrumental in launching Pitseolak's career as an artist. While traditions like carving and sewing were long-standing in Inuit communities, Inuit had no substantial access to audiences and buyers in southern Canada before the [West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative](#) was established in 1961. By making goods that could be sold through the Co-op, Pitseolak was able to gain an income that supported herself and her family.

Within a few years, Pitseolak had begun to pursue the drawing and printmaking for which she is now renowned. In her work, she explored a range of themes and visual motifs that struck a chord with both Inuit and non-Inuit art lovers. Pitseolak's work is powerful in part because she used the medium as a form of self-expression, beyond the aesthetics and motifs that were popular in commercial art at the time. She produced over eight thousand drawings over the course of her career, many of which were made into prints. Her success led to the publication of a biography entitled *Pitseolak: Pictures Out of My Life* in 1971 and an adaptation of the book by the National Film Board of Canada in 1973. She was inducted into the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts the following year, and a retrospective exhibition of her work toured Canada and the United States. In 1977, she was awarded the Order of Canada.

Pitseolak Ashoona died in Kinngait in 1983. Her remarkable work paved the way for generations of Inuit artists, including her son Kuiga Ashoona (1933–2014); her daughter Napachie Pootoogook (1938–2002); and her granddaughters Annie Pootoogook (1969–2016) and Shuvina Ashoona (b.1961). She was a leader in the emergence of modern Inuit art in Canada, and her images of life in the North continue to inform and inspire.



Fig 4. Pitseolak Ashoona, drawing for print *Journey to Toodja*, c.1973. Here a family journeys to a camp on Akudluk (Salisbury Island).



Fig 5. Pitseolak Ashoona, *Untitled*, c.1979–80. This drawing shows a stretched polar bear skin and the tools used by Inuit women.



Fig 6. Pitseolak Ashoona, *Untitled*, c.1966–76. In this scene of summer camping, Pitseolak places a family in a fishing weir, with fishing spears, skin pails, and other tools in the foreground.



Fig 7. Pitseolak Ashoona, *Untitled (Camp joyfully greeting the return of a family member)*, 1976. In this scene dogs share the family's happiness.

NATIONAL & WORLD EVENTS



Fig 8. The schooner *Bowdoin* at Idjirituq (Schooner Bay) during the winter of 1921–22. The crew worked with local Inuit to construct snow domes over the boat's hatches; the domes provided wind protection while allowing air to circulate into the vessel.

Canada declares its sovereignty over the Arctic mainland and islands, and the Department of Northern Affairs is established.

The Arctic exploration schooner *Bowdoin* first crosses the Arctic Circle and is iced in at Idjirituq in the winter of 1921–22.

The West Baffin Sports Fishing Co-operative is first incorporated. In 1961, the name becomes the West Baffin Eskimo Co-op Limited—a new hub of artistic activity.

The Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (now known as Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami) is created by Inuit leaders to voice concerns to Canada's federal government and others about Inuit land ownership and resources across the North, including the Northwest Territories and northern Québec.



Fig 9. Map of Nunavut.

The Nunavut Land Claims Agreement Act is signed between the federal government of Canada and the Inuit of the Nunavut Settlement Area to form the territory of Nunavut in 1999.

On April 1, Nunavut is officially created as a territory in Canada.

The date marks the division of Nunavut from the Northwest Territories.

After amassing extensive research detailing the relationship between Inuit and the Canadian government between 1950 and 1975, the final report of the Qikiqtani Truth Commission is released, presenting Inuit testimony about the ways that detrimental government policies had a profound effect on Inuit lives in the region.



Fig 10. A ceremony commemorating the establishment of Nunavut, April 1999.

PITSEOLAK ASHOONA'S LIFE

Pitseolak is born at a camp on the southeast coast of Tujakjuak (Nottingham Island).

The Hudson's Bay Company establishes a trading post on Qikiqtaaluk (Baffin Island). The same year, Pitseolak arrives with her family, and they trap fox to trade furs at the post.

Pitseolak marries Ashoona in a Christian ceremony in Kinngait (Cape Dorset). Shortly after, she gives birth to her first child, Namoonie. When Ashoona dies in the early-mid 1940s, Pitseolak moves her family to live in Kinngait year-round.

Writer and historian Dorothy Harley Eber spends three weeks interviewing Pitseolak for the eventual publication of a biography, alongside Inuktitut translators Quatsia Ottochi and Annie Manning.

Pitseolak is inducted into the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts.

The retrospective *Pitseolak*, a touring exhibition that went to the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa and the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, opens.

Pitseolak receives the Order of Canada.

Pitseolak dies in Kinngait (Cape Dorset) on May 28, after a brief illness.



Fig 11. Pitseolak and her brother Kavavow, recently returned from a hunt, c.1921–22.



Fig 12. The camp of Pitseolak's uncle Kavavow at Idjirituq in the winter, c.1921–22.



Fig 13. Pitseolak drawing in her summer tent in Kinngait, June 1967.

LEARNING ACTIVITY #1

EXPLORING UNDERSTANDINGS OF COMMUNITY THROUGH INUIT QAUJIMAJATUQANGIT PRINCIPLES

This activity introduces students to Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, or “what Inuit have always known to be true.” Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit is a set of traditional beliefs, laws, principles, and values that articulate important aspects of the Inuit worldview, and it is a focus for governance and life in Nunavut. Community, collective identity, and the laws of relationships are central to this system of beliefs and can be understood through Pitseolak Ashoona’s vibrant images of life in the North, where community and collective identity are central. Students will be introduced to this cultural context and encouraged to make personal connections, considering their own communities and collective identities, and sharing their knowledge with their peers.

Big Idea

Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principles

Learning Goals

1. I am learning about Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principles in relationship to the theme of community and collective identity.
2. I can listen actively to my peers and show respect for their thoughts on community.
3. I can understand multiple definitions of and perspectives on the theme of community.
4. I can describe my role in and relationship to my local community/communities.
5. I can describe how my community shapes and informs my identity.

Materials

- Chart paper
- Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit handout ([page 16](#))
- Pens, pencils
- [Pitseolak Ashoona Image File](#)
- [Pitseolak Ashoona: Life & Work](#)
- “Who Was Pitseolak Ashoona?” biographic information sheet ([page 3](#))



Fig 14. Pitseolak Ashoona, *In summer there were always very big mosquitoes*, 1970. This work appeared on the cover of Pitseolak’s autobiography.

Learning Activity #1 Continued

Process

1. Divide students into groups and ask each group to discuss the questions listed below, writing their ideas on sheets of chart paper. Ask each group to share their ideas with the class from their seats or gather the class in a circle. Display the chart papers in the classroom.

- What is a community?
- What community / communities do you belong to?
- Who are the members of your community?
- What roles and responsibilities do people have in your community / communities?
- What are your roles and responsibilities to others in your community / communities?
- What values and beliefs guide your community / communities?
- How does / do your community / communities influence who you are and how you see yourself?

Remind students to be supportive and respectful in these discussions.

2. Introduce students to Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit using the handout (on [page 16](#)). Highlight the role of community and collective identity, and ask students to reflect on them (see Additional Resources [on [page 17](#)] for expanded definitions and guidance).

3. Introduce students to Pitseolak Ashoona using the biographic information sheet. Identify southern Qikiqtaaluk (Baffin Island), Kinngait (Cape Dorset), and other locations on the map (see [Pitseolak Ashoona Image File](#)).



Fig 15. This map of southern Qikiqtaaluk (Baffin Island) locates the hunting camps where Pitseolak lived until the late 1950s.

Learning Activity #1 Continued

4. Have students read “[Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit](#)” in the Significance & Critical Issues chapter of *Pitseolak Ashoona: Life & Work* to connect these principles to Pitseolak Ashoona’s work and summarize what they have learned from the reading during a class discussion. Guiding questions include the following: how does what you have learned about Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit change your perception of Inuit? How does what you have learned change how you see yourself and your role(s) in your community? What similarities and differences do you see when you consider the Inuit concept of community and your own community? For example, what concepts or phrases are similar in your home or in your community? What questions do you have?
5. Introduce students to *Eskimos on a Sealskin Boat*, c.1966–72 (see [Pitseolak Ashoona Image File](#)). Ask students the following questions: how is community shown in this artwork? What makes you say that?



Fig 16. Pitseolak Ashoona, drawing for print *Eskimos on Sealskin Boat*, c.1966–72. This drawing shows a group of women and children in an umiak and a man in a kayak.

Learning Activity #1 Continued

6. Place students in working groups and assign each group one of the following images by Pitseolak Ashoona; each of these works depicts different aspects or expressions of her community and of Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit. Have students use their new knowledge of Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit to identify different representations of “community” that they see in the following:

- *Memories of Childbirth*, 1976
- *Moving Camp*, c.1971
- *Summer Camp Scene*, c.1974
- *Winter Camping*, c.1966–76

Have each group share their insights with the class.



Fig 17. Pitseolak Ashoona, drawing for print *Memories of Childbirth*, 1976. Here Pitseolak shows a woman in labour, kneeling and surrounded by women supporting her.



Fig 18. Pitseolak Ashoona, *Moving Camp*, c.1971. In this drawing a family group moves together.



Fig 19. Pitseolak Ashoona, *Summer Camp Scene*, c.1974. This family's camp is between two hills.

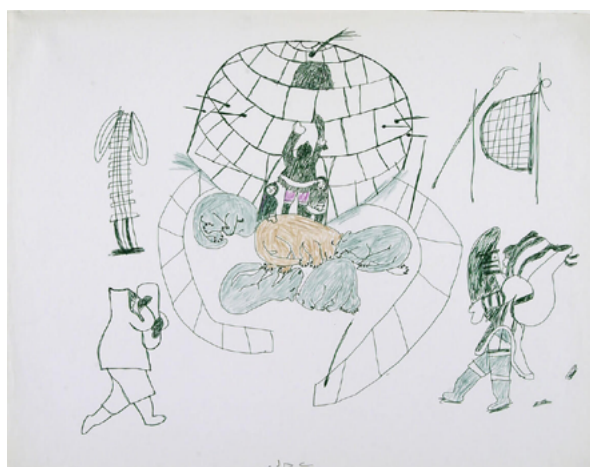


Fig 20. Pitseolak Ashoona, *Winter Camping*, 1966–76. In this scene, dogs rest at the entrance to a newly built igloo.

LEARNING ACTIVITY #2

LAY OF THE LAND: UNDERSTANDING LAND STEWARDSHIP AND INUKSUIT

Land Stewardship is a concept that proposes an individual and collective responsibility to protect and care for the land and its many resources. The relationship between individuals, communities, and the land is central to Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit. One expression of this relationship is the type of stone structure called an inuksuk. In many Inuit communities, inuksuit (plural for the word “inuksuk”) have been used for centuries to share knowledge about the land with members of the community, and therefore centralize the relationship between individuals, communities, and the land. This activity invites students to gain a deeper, culturally specific understanding into the myriad functions of the inuksuk within Inuit Nunangat (Inuit regions in Canada).

Big Idea

Land stewardship for Inuit

Learning Goals

1. I am learning about the concept of land stewardship.
2. I am learning about Inuit worldviews in relation to human relationships to and with the land.
3. I am learning about the cultural significance of inuksuit.

Materials

- Access to computers and the internet for research
- Audio/visual equipment to play a short video clip
- Paper
- Pens, pencils
- [Pitseolak Ashoona Image File](#)
- [Pitseolak Ashoona: Life & Work](#)
- “Who Was Pitseolak Ashoona?” biographic information sheet ([page 3](#))

Process

1. Show students the following video clip of Inuit cultural activist Peter Irniq discussing the significance of inuksuit to Inuit (see the Glossary for a definition of “[inuksuk](#)” based on this video). <https://youtu.be/NKQ97rOwBH0>.
2. To summarize what students have learned, write the word “inuksuk” on the board and ask students to share what they learned from the video.

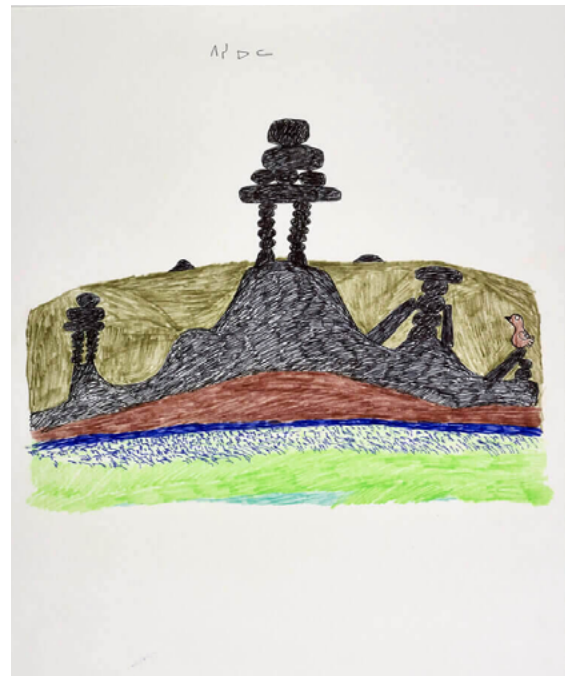


Fig 21. Pitseolak Ashoona, *Untitled*, c.1966–76. Inuksuit appear in almost all of Pitseolak's landscapes.

Learning Activity #2 Continued

3. Project Pitseolak Ashoona's drawing *Innuksuk Builders**, c.1966–68, and Kiakshuk's work *Stone Images Mark the Western Sea Route*, 1960. Engage students in a class discussion. Possible questions include:

- What impressions do you get about community from these works?
- What is similar about these images? What is different?
- The title for Kiakshuk's image refers to the "Western Sea Route." Does anyone know what the Northwest Passage is? Who do you think would have been considering this "route", and how does this change your understanding of Inuksuit?

Note: The spelling "Innuksuk" here is reflective of time period.



Fig 22. Pitseolak Ashoona, drawing for print *Innuksuk Builders*, c.1966–68. In this scene, the man placing the top stone is Pitseolak's father, Ottochie.



Fig 23. Kiakshuk, *Stone Images Mark the Western Sea Route*, 1960. This print shows men constructing a series of Inuksuit.

4. Have students read [*Innuksuk Builders*](#) in *Pitseolak Ashoona: Life & Work* and summarize key learning through a class discussion.
5. In working groups, ask students to think about the concept of "land stewardship" in connection with the different functions of inuksuit. Ask each group to work together to research one specific function of the inuksuk (see Additional Resources [\[on page 17\]](#) for potential sources) and connect this function to land stewardship. Possible functions to assign include the following:
 - Navigation
 - Sacred places
 - Communication
 - Hunting signposts
 - Travel
6. Have students present their research to the class and encourage them to revisit topics discussed in Learning Activity 1 (on [page 5](#)), to highlight the connections to community. Conclude the discussion by summarizing the importance of the connection between inuksuit and the Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit.

CULMINATING TASK

BUILDING INTERCULTURAL KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

As author Christine Lalonde states in *Pitseolak Ashoona: Life & Work*, the transition from life on the land to settlement living in the North was “the most drastic change to Inuit society in the twentieth century.” Increasing colonial encroachment introduced new challenges into Inuit communities, including social, political, and cultural practices that did not always align with the Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit. This is reflected in contemporary media today, which often controls narratives about Inuit without consulting Inuit themselves or engaging Inuit to tell their own narratives. This activity invites students to think critically about concepts derived from colonization, alongside Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit and Inuit voices. Equipped with this knowledge, students will work collaboratively to create blog posts on community and land stewardship in contemporary Inuit Nunangat (Inuit Regions in Canada).

Big Idea

Community and land stewardship in contemporary Inuit Nunangat (Inuit Regions in Canada)

Learning Goals

1. I can practise intercultural empathy and respect.
2. I can think critically about language used by the Canadian government in relationship to contemporary Inuit communities and Inuit Nunangat (Inuit regions in Canada).
3. I can learn about culturally specific concepts.
4. I can compare concepts and terminology across cultural contexts.
5. I am respectful and collaborate well with my peers.

Success Criteria

To be added to, reduced, or changed in collaboration with students.

1. Project demonstrates application of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit in the approach to learning.
2. Participation in group work demonstrates team problem-solving skills and fosters collaborative learning.
3. Project and presentation clearly answer and engage with the key grounding questions outlined in the activity.
4. Selected topic is treated with an awareness of and respect for cultural specificity.
5. Project adheres to proper research practices, including the use of at least one source authored by an Inuit journalist, scholar, or writer.
6. Written work is respectful, accurate, clearly written, and edited.

Materials

- Access to computers for research purposes
- Access to online platform for compilation of blog posts (e.g., WordPress)
- Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit handout ([page 16](#))
- Paper
- Pens, pencils
- Timeline of historical events and Pitseolak Ashoona's life ([page 4](#))



Fig 24. Pitseolak Ashoona, drawing for print *Summer Camp Scene*, c.1966–76. Here Pitseolak shows women working together.

*Culminating Task Continued***Process**

1. Distribute copies of the timeline to give students some background information about colonization and government presence in Inuit communities. Explain that Pitseolak Ashoona's life bridges a transition period in the North as colonialism intensified.
2. Review the handout about Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit in relation to students' discussions of Pitseolak Ashoona's work (see Learning Activity 1 [on [page 5](#)]). Explain that the principles are critical to the Government of Nunavut (see Additional Resources [on [page 17](#)]).
3. Introduce the following English terms in order to learn about how relationships between the Canadian government and Inuit communities are articulated in some contexts.
 - Sovereignty
 - Self-determination
 - Jurisdiction
 - Reconciliation
 - Self-governance
 - Resistance
 - Resilience

Place students in groups and assign each group one of these terms. Ask them to come up with a definition and share with the class. Have them consider the following questions: does this term have something in common with Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit? Why, or why not?

4. Compile a class glossary for these terms and make it available digitally for students.
5. Ask students to work collaboratively in groups. Using the class glossary, task students with researching and writing a blog post on a contemporary issue related to the themes of community and land stewardship in Inuit Nunangat (Inuit Regions in Canada). Possible topics include:
 - Food security and the land
 - Seal hunting and the EU seal skin ban
 - Different conceptions of what "environmentalism" means and entails
 - The Qikiqtani Truth Commission
 - Land rights
 - Climate change



Fig 25. Pitseolak Ashoona, *The Eyes of a Happy Woman*, c.1974. This work illustrates Pitseolak's desire to express hope and happiness.

Culminating Task Continued

6. In preparing their blog posts, students should consider a range of sources and use the following questions to critically examine possible sources of information.

- Whose perspective and worldview is being presented? Whose voice and perspective is not being represented and heard?
- How are Inuit and roles of Inuit being portrayed in mainstream, non-Inuit media sources? How are non-Inuit and roles of non-Inuit being portrayed?
- How do our own biases and lack of awareness of different people, cultures, and environments influence how we see and interpret media?

Require that students seek both Inuit and non-Inuit sources of information, and remind them to document their sources carefully. Emphasize that the blog posts should be creative and encourage students to incorporate images by Pitseolak Ashoona.

7. Compile student blog posts and share with the class.

If possible, provide students with a structured set of questions to review the themes explored in the other blog posts.

8. As a concluding exercise, hold a group discussion about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action (see Additional Resources [on [page 17](#)]). Ask students to think about how they are going to take what they have learned forward in their lives. Possible suggestions include the following:

- Have conversations with your family at home about Truth and Reconciliation.
- Seek out Inuit perspectives on social media. Suggested hashtags are: #Inuit; #InuitQaujimaqatunqangit; #IQPrinciples; #InuitNunanga.
- Come up with a list of search terms that would allow you to seek out Inuit perspectives in future research projects.
- Make a list of people who you could send the class blog to.
- Share your favourite image by Pitseolak Ashoona through one of your social media accounts. What is it about the image that speaks to you? Why?
- What questions do you have about Inuit lives and perspectives and how or where can you seek answers?



Fig 26. Pitseolak Ashoona, drawing for print *The River at Netsilik*, c.1966–76. Pitseolak travelled to the camp at Netsilik with her husband.

HOW PITSEOLAK ASHOONA MADE ART: STYLE & TECHNIQUE

Here are a few of the important artistic concepts that characterize the art of Pitseolak Ashoona. For more information see the [Style & Technique](#) chapter of *Pitseolak Ashoona: Life & Work*.

WORKS ON PAPER: GRAPHITE AND FELT-TIP PENS

Pitseolak Ashoona began experimenting with works on paper when she saw the work of her cousin Kiakshuk in the first print collection of the graphics studio newly established in Kinngait (Cape Dorset) in 1959. Three main drawing materials were available through the studio: until 1965, graphite was the first and only material; pencil crayons became available around 1966; and felt-tip pens were popular until about 1975. Pitseolak experimented with all three, though her early years with graphite alone allowed her to develop a strong and confident use of line, which became a defining feature of her subsequent work—in both colour and black and white.

ANIMAL AND HUMAN FIGURES

Some of Pitseolak's most enchanting works feature intimate combinations of animal and human figures. In some works, animal figures are given human qualities and traits thus revealing a close relationship between animals and humans, and a deep respect for the animal world. They appear as characters in traditional stories; as comforting figures; as food sources; and as metaphors. One of Pitseolak's favourite animals to draw was the bird, a figure that appears in over half of her drawings.

PRINTMAKING

Printmaking is often celebrated for its potential to reach much larger audiences than one-of-a-kind works, and over 250 of Pitseolak's prints were included in the much-anticipated yearly collections published by Dorset Fine Arts. She experimented with [engraving](#) and went on to explore [etching](#) and [lithography](#). These techniques involve using sharp objects to create drawings on different surfaces, like wood, copper, and stone. Different chemicals are then used to fix the image onto the surface, so that multiple prints can be made from the same image.

INUIT QAUJIMAJATUQANGIT

Key to understanding Pitseolak's work is Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit: Inuit worldviews, knowledge, and understandings of land and community that are taught and passed down between generations. Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit is evident in Pitseolak's work, and can be helpful in understanding the themes and narratives that shine through. Pitseolak's intimate scenes of camp life reveal the importance of community in everyday life.



Fig 27. Pitseolak Ashoona, *Woman with an Ulu*, 1962. This work is one of Pitseolak's early prints.



Fig 28. Pitseolak Ashoona, *Fantastic Animals*, c.1970. In her lifetime, Pitseolak created thousands of drawings of birds.



Fig 29. Pitseolak Ashoona, *Camp at Igalalik*, 1973. Pitseolak and her husband often camped at Igalalik in the summer.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Supplementary Materials Provided by the Art Canada Institute

- The online art book *Pitseolak Ashoona: Life & Work* by Christine Lalonde: <https://aci-iac.ca/art-books/pitseolak-ashoona/>
- [Pitseolak Ashoona Image File](#) with artworks and images related to this lesson
- “Who Was Pitseolak Ashoona?” biographic information sheet ([page 3](#))
- Timelines of national and world events and Pitseolak Ashoona’s life ([page 4](#))
- “How Pitseolak Ashoona Made Art: Style & Technique” information sheet ([page 14](#))
- Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit handout ([page 16](#))

GLOSSARY

Here is a list of terms that appear in this resource guide and are relevant to the learning activities and culminating task. For a comprehensive list of art-related terms, visit the Art Canada Institute’s ever-growing [Glossary of Canadian Art History](#).

engraving

The name applied to both a type of print and the process used in its production. Engravings are made by cutting into a metal, wood, or plastic plate with specialized tools and then inking the incised lines. The ink is transferred to paper under the immense pressure of a printing press.

etching

A printmaking technique that follows the same principles as engraving but uses acid instead of a burin to cut through the plate. A copper plate is coated with a waxy acid resist; the artist draws an image into the wax with a needle. The plate is then immersed in an acid bath, incising the lines and leaving the rest of the plate untouched.

inuksuk

An inuksuk is a stone figure constructed by humans, that has been integral to Inuit culture for centuries. The term “inuksuk” can be translated and understood to mean “to act in the capacity of a human.” Among their many practical functions, inuksuit (plural of “inuksuk”) are used as hunting and navigational aids, coordination points, and message centres. They are also often intertwined with representations of Canada and the North, and appear on the flag of Nunavut. This definition has been adapted from the [Canadian Encyclopedia](#).

lithograph

A type of print invented in 1798 in Germany by Aloys Senefelder. Like other planographic methods of image reproduction, lithography relies on the fact that grease and water do not mix. Placed in a press, the moistened and inked lithographic stone will print only those areas previously designed with greasy lithographic ink.

West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative (Kinngait Studios)

Established in 1960 as a formalized organization, the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative is an artists’ co-operative that houses a print shop. It markets and sells Inuit carvings and prints, in particular through its affiliate in the South, Dorset Fine Arts. Since approximately 2006 the arts and crafts sector of the co-op has been referred to as Kinngait Studios.



Fig 30. Pitseolak Ashoona, *Untitled*, c.1966–67. This drawing shows Pitseolak’s early attempts to integrate animal figures into a lush, colourful landscape.

INTRODUCING INUIT QAUJIMAJATUQANGIT

Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit encompasses Inuit experience, values, beliefs, and knowledge about the world, with the past informing the present and future in a non-linear way. It translates to mean “what Inuit have always known to be true,” and brings together social, cultural, ecological, and cosmological knowledge. Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit has played an integral role in establishing Nunavut’s government and plays an integral role in Inuit communities.

The following is an introduction to Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit based on the *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit: Education Framework for Nunavut Curriculum* published by the Government of Nunavut.

Belief Systems and Laws

Inuit belief systems and laws of relationships between individuals, communities, and the environment are central to Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit. Some of the belief systems that Inuit are guided by include:

- **Laws of Relationships:** Including the laws of relationship to the environment, and relationships to people, the cycle of life, and the cycle of the seasons.
- **Inuit Maligait:** Essential beliefs that include working for the common good, being respectful of all living things, maintaining harmony, and continually preparing for a better future.

Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit includes these communal laws or principles:

Inuuqatigiitsiarniq: Respecting others, relationships, and caring for people

Tunnganarniq: Fostering good spirits by being open, welcoming, and inclusive

Pijitsirniq: Serving and providing for family and / or community

Aajiiqatigiinniq: Decision-making through discussion and consensus

Pilimmaksarniq/Pijariuqsarniq: Development of skills and knowledge through observation, mentoring, practice, and effort

Piliriqatigiinniq /Ikajuqtigiinniq: Working together for a common cause

Qanuqtuurunarniq: Being innovative and resourceful

Avatittinnik Kamatsiarniq: Respect and care for the land, animals, and the environment

EXTERNAL RESOURCES

The following external resources can be used to augment the learning activities and materials provided by the Art Canada Institute. They are to be used at the teacher's own discretion.

Angry Inuk—documentary film by Alethea Arnaquq-Baril

https://www.nfb.ca/film/angry_inuk/

ArctiConnexion: Projects (Water Quality, Food & Wildlife, Culture & Knowledge, Workshops)

<https://arcticonnexion.ca/>

Inuit Art Quarterly

<https://www.inuitartfoundation.org/inuit-art-quarterly>

Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) and Inuit Circumpolar Council of Canada

<https://www.inuitcircumpolar.com/>

Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit Education Framework for Nunavut Curriculum

<https://www.gov.nu.ca/sites/default/files/files/Inuit%20Qaujimajatuqangit%20ENG.pdf>

Inuit Siku Atlas (atlas of sea ice)

<https://sikuatlas.ca/index.html>

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami

<https://www.itk.ca/>

Isuma, Inuit Culture Education: Lesson Plan, “Understanding Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ)”

<http://www.isuma.tv/inuit-culture-education/understanding-inuit-qaujimajatuqangit-iq-lesson>

Nunatsiaq News article: “Principle of environmental stewardship alive and well in Nunavut” (April 16, 2010)

https://nunatsiaq.com/stories/article/98789_principle_of_environmental_stewardship/

Nunatsiaq News article: “Watershed south of Arviat to become Indigenous Protected Area” (August 28, 2020)

<https://nunatsiaq.com/stories/article/watershed-south-of-arviat-to-become-indigenous-protected-area/>

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action

http://www.trc.ca/assets/pdf/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf



Fig 31. Pitseolak Ashoona, *Untitled*, c.1966–76. Pitseolak includes a microwave tower in this unusual landscape drawing.

FIGURE LIST

Every effort has been made to secure permissions for all copyrighted material. The Art Canada Institute will gladly correct any errors or omissions.

Fig 1. Pitseolak Ashoona, *Untitled (Birds Flying Overhead)*, c.1966–67, coloured felt-tip pen on paper, 65.6 x 50.5 cm. Collection of the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative Ltd., on loan to the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg, Ontario, CD.27.3342. © Dorset Fine Arts.

Fig 2. Pitseolak Ashoona, *Untitled*, 1976, coloured pencil and coloured felt-tip pen on paper, 51.4 x 66.7 cm. Collection of the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative Ltd., on loan to the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg, Ontario, CD.27.4434. © Dorset Fine Arts.

Fig 3. Pitseolak in Cape Dorset, 1968, photograph by Norman Hallendy. McMichael Canadian Art Collection Archives, Kleinburg, Gift of Norman Hallendy, 2007, ARC-NH2007.4.1

Fig 4. Pitseolak Ashoona, drawing for print *Journey to Toodja*, c.1973, coloured felt-tip pen on paper, 50.7 x 66.3 cm. Collection of the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative Ltd., on loan to the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg, Ontario, CD.27.3577. © Dorset Fine Arts.

Fig 5. Pitseolak Ashoona, *Untitled*, c.1979–80, coloured pencil and coloured felt-tip pen on paper, 51.1 x 66.1 cm. Collection of the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative Ltd., on loan to the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg, Ontario, CD.27.6487. © Dorset Fine Arts.

Fig 6. Pitseolak Ashoona, *Untitled*, c.1966–76, coloured felt-tip pen on paper, 35.5 x 21.6 cm. Collection of the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative Ltd., on loan to the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg, Ontario, CD.27.1306. © Dorset Fine Arts.

Fig 7. Pitseolak Ashoona, *Untitled (Camp joyfully greeting the return of a family member)*, 1976, graphite on paper, 51 x 60 cm. Private collection. © Dorset Fine Arts.

Fig 8. The schooner *Bowdoin* at Idjirituq (Schooner Bay) during the winter, 1922, photograph by Donald Baxter MacMillan. Peary-MacMillan Arctic Museum and Arctic Studies Center, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, Maine, 3000.33.422.

Fig 9. *Map of Nunavut*, 2011. Courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

Fig 10. A ceremony commemorating the establishment of Nunavut, 1999, photograph by Ansgar Walk. Courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

Fig 11. Pitseolak and her brother Kavavow, c.1921–22, photograph by Donald Baxter MacMillan. Peary-MacMillan Arctic Museum and Arctic Studies Center, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, Maine.

Fig 12. The camp of Pitseolak's uncle Kavavow at Idjirituq in the winter, c.1921–22, photograph by Donald Baxter MacMillan. Peary-MacMillan Arctic Museum and Arctic Studies Center, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, Maine, 3000.33.728.

Fig 13. Pitseolak drawing in her summer tent in Cape Dorset, June 1967. Photograph by Evelyn Crees.

Fig 14. Pitseolak Ashoona, *In summer there were always very big mosquitoes*, 1970, porous pointed pen, 68.6 x 53.5 cm. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Gift of Samuel and Esther Sarick, Toronto, 2002, 2002/10664. © Estate of Pitseolak Ashoona. Reproduced with the permission of Dorset Fine Arts.

Fig 15. Map of southern Qikiqtaaluk (Baffin Island). © Eric Leinberger.

Fig 16. Pitseolak Ashoona, drawing for print *Eskimos on Sealskin Boat*, c.1966–72, coloured felt-tip pen on paper, 66.4 x 51.4 cm. Collection of the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative Ltd., on loan to the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg, Ontario, CD.27.2528. © Dorset Fine Arts.

Fig 17. Pitseolak Ashoona, drawing for print *Memories of Childbirth*, 1976, coloured felt-tip pen on paper, 24.1 x 35.6 cm. Collection of the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative Ltd., on loan to the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg, Ontario, CD.27.1184. © Dorset Fine Arts.

Fig 18. Pitseolak Ashoona, *Moving Camp*, c.1971, coloured porous-point pen on paper, 51.8 x 66.3 cm. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. Gift of Samuel and Esther Sarick, Toronto, 2002, 2002/10671. © Estate of Pitseolak Ashoona. Reproduced with the permission of Dorset Fine Arts.

Fig 19. Pitseolak Ashoona, *Summer Camp Scene*, c.1974, felt pen on wove paper, 50.8 x 65.6 cm. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. Gift of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 1989 (36414). Photo: NGC. © Dorset Fine Arts.

Fig 20. Pitseolak Ashoona, *Winter Camping*, 1966–76, porous pointed pen and coloured pencil, 50.8 x 65.7 cm. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Gift of Samuel and Esther Sarick, Toronto, 2002, 2002/10675. © Estate of Pitseolak Ashoona. Reproduced with the permission of Dorset Fine Arts.

Fig 21. Pitseolak Ashoona, *Untitled*, c.1966–76, coloured pencil and coloured felt-tip pen on paper, 43.9 x 36 cm. Collection of the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative Ltd., on loan to the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg, Ontario, CD.27.2462. © Dorset Fine Arts.

Fig 22. Pitseolak Ashoona, drawing for print *Innuksuk Builders*, c.1966–68, wax crayon and coloured felt-tip pen on paper, 50.7 x 65.6 cm. Collection of the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative Ltd., on loan to the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg, Ontario, CD.27.1428. © Dorset Fine Arts.

Fig 23. Kiakshuk, *Stone Images Mark the Western Sea Route*, 1960, stencil, printed by Timothy Ottochie, 48.4 x 61.1 cm. Canadian Museum of History, Gatineau. © Dorset Fine Arts.

Fig 24. Pitseolak Ashoona, drawing for print *Summer Camp Scene*, c.1966–76, wax crayon and coloured felt-tip pen on paper, 45.7 x 61.2 cm. Collection of the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative Ltd., on loan to the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg, Ontario, CD.27.1736. © Dorset Fine Arts.

Fig 25. Pitseolak Ashoona, *The Eyes of a Happy Woman*, c.1974, felt pen on wove paper, 66.2 x 51 cm. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. Gift of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 1989 (36406). Photo: NGC. © Dorset Fine Arts.

Fig 26. Pitseolak Ashoona, drawing for print *The River at Netsilik*, c.1966–76, coloured felt-tip pen on paper, 66.4 x 51 cm. Collection of the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative Ltd., on loan to the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg, Ontario, CD.27.4031. © Dorset Fine Arts.

Fig 27. Pitseolak Ashoona, *Woman with an Ulu*, 1962, engraving on paper. Canadian Museum of History, Gatineau. © Dorset Fine Arts.

Fig 28. Pitseolak Ashoona, *Fantastic Animals*, c.1970, porous pointed pen, 66.1 x 50.7 cm. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Gift of Samuel and Esther Sarick, Toronto, 2002, 2002/10668. © Estate of Pitseolak Ashoona. Reproduced with the permission of Dorset Fine Arts.

Fig 29. Pitseolak Ashoona, *Camp at Igalalik*, 1973, stonecut on paper, printed by Timothy Ottochie, 62 x 86.5 cm. Canadian Museum of History, Gatineau. © Dorset Fine Arts.

Fig 30. Pitseolak Ashoona, *Untitled*, c.1966–67, coloured felt-tip pen on paper, 61.1 x 45.8 cm. Collection of the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative Ltd., on loan to the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg, Ontario, CD.27.1651. © Dorset Fine Arts.

Fig 31. Pitseolak Ashoona, *Untitled*, c.1966–76, coloured pencil, 45.9 x 61.2 cm. Collection of the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative Ltd., on loan to the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg, Ontario, CD.27.2338. © Dorset Fine Arts.