

Preface

This book is the result of more than forty years of anthropological and ethnolinguistic research among the Inuit. Since 1965 I have had the opportunity to visit over thirty-five arctic communities, initially in Nunavik (Arctic Quebec) and later on in Nunatsiavut (Labrador), Nunavut, the Mackenzie region, Greenland, and northern Alaska. During my first trips to the North as a graduate student in anthropology, I managed to become reasonably fluent in Inuktitut. This oriented my research interests toward Inuit semantics, dialectology, sociolinguistics, and later on, questions of identity.

My research would have been impossible if a large number of Inuit men and women had not gracefully agreed, over the years, to share their linguistic and cultural knowledge with me. They are far too numerous to mention here, but I am especially grateful to the residents of Quaqtaq, Nunavik, who taught me their language and adopted me as their *inuuaqati* (living companion) over four decades ago. My thanks go also to my colleagues and students in anthropology, linguistics, and Inuit studies, who were always willing to exchange ideas on our common interests, as well as to the various granting agencies that funded my research.

As far as the present book is concerned, I owe a special debt to Dr Lawrence D. Kaplan, head of the Alaska Native Language Center (University of Alaska Fairbanks), who read its opening chapters and offered very useful comments; to Birger Poppel, Carl Christian Olsen (head of the Greenland Language Secretariat), and Nuka Møller from Greenland, who answered my questions on language statistics; to the two anonymous reviewers who read my original manuscript

and made very constructive suggestions; to Robert Lewis, whose copy-editing skills greatly improved my sometimes idiosyncratic English; and to Association Inuksiutiit Katimajit, which supported the publication of the book. The maps were drawn by Mireille Sioui along a model originally designed by Johanne Levesque, and all translations into English are mine.