INTERVIEWING INUIT ELDERS
Perspectives on Traditional Health

Ilisapi Ootoova, Tipuula Qaapik Atagutsiak, Tirisi Ijjangiaq, Jaikku Pitseolak, Aalasi Joamie, Akisu Joamie, Malaija Papatsie
Edited by Michèle Therrien and Frédéric Laugrand
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Volume 5

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Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS i
MAP ii
INTRODUCTION: Strong Mind, Resilient Body: A global approach 1
  Passing down knowledge orally 3
  Value of experience and need for restoring practices 4
  The power of words 5
  The courses 6
  Sharing knowledge 6
  Format of the book 7

PART ONE: TUNUNIRMIUT ELDERS (North Baffin) 9

Chapter 1: Sick Body: Diagnoses and Treatments 11
  Cuts and wounds 11
  The blood and nutrition 20
  Lice 22
  The use of seal oil for medicinal purposes 24
  Midwifery and childbirth 28
  Preparing oil for the qulliq 36
  Skin diseases 40
  Diagnosing sickness in the body 45
  Ear and eye ailments 51
  Seizures 59
  Allergies and infections 63
  Medicinal plants 66
  Sickness before and after the arrival of the whalers 74
  Different categories of illness 77

Chapter 2: Physical Disorders and Mental States: Cultural Representations and Answers 79
  Physical and mental resilience 79
  Body aches and constipation 92
  Naruralattijuq, sickness that travels through the body; depression, and the value of conversation 95
  Childrearing 100
  The need to return to traditional midwifery 107
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Map
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Aignunuaq</th>
<th>Sanikiluaq</th>
<th>Sanikiluaq</th>
<th></th>
<th>Aignunuaq</th>
<th>Pond Inlet</th>
<th>Mittimatalik</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Kimmirut</td>
<td>Kimmirut</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td>Nanisivik</td>
<td>Nanisivik</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Iqaluit</td>
<td>Iqaluit</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td>Chesterfield Inlet</td>
<td>Igluligaarjuk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pangnirtung</td>
<td>Panniqtuuq</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td>Rankin Inlet</td>
<td>Kangiq&amp;iniq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Qikiqtarjuaq</td>
<td>Qikiqtarjuaq</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td>Whale Cove</td>
<td>Tikirjuaq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cape Dorset</td>
<td>Kinngait</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td>Arviat</td>
<td>Arviat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>Clyde River</td>
<td>Kangiqtugaapik</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td>Baker Lake</td>
<td>Qamanitluaq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>Coral Harbour</td>
<td>SalliQ</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
<td>Taloyoak</td>
<td>Talurjuaq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hall Beach</td>
<td>Sanirajak</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
<td>Gjoa Haven</td>
<td>Uqsuqtuq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>Igloolik</td>
<td>Igloolik</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cambridge Bay</td>
<td>Iqalukuuttiaq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td>Repulse Bay</td>
<td>Naujaat</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bay Chimo</td>
<td>Umingmaktuuq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pelly Bay</td>
<td>Arviligjuaq</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bathurst Inlet</td>
<td>Kinguk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td>Arctic Bay</td>
<td>Tununirusiq</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
<td>Kugluktuk</td>
<td>Qurluqtuq</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
"The mind is so powerful that it can take over the body"

(Akisu Joamie)

Strong Mind, Resilient Body: A global approach

While discussing traditional health practices and medical knowledge, one could expect elders to give a list of the best techniques to cure sickness depending on the various types of health problems or injuries they were facing in the past: how to deal with boils, infections, fever, eye infections, colds, broken bones, drowning, and so on. But the Inuit perspective encompasses much more. Along with techniques to heal cuts and wounds, and to cure sicknesses (see also Meeko, 1989; Anonymous, 1998), elders discussed recollections of how to develop a strong mind and a resilient body.

It is important to make clear that in Inuit societies medical knowledge never existed as an autonomous and formal body of knowledge as in modern Western societies. Though many practices are described in detail in this book, most of the elders’ testimonies are of a more general nature, the main concern being life and consciousness in all their dimensions.

Specific techniques are therefore part of a broader discourse, for the elders describe and comment on inherited conceptions or values: a complete cosmology is made available in which life and health are approached globally (see also Therrien and Qumaq, 1995). Elders stress that only a strong mind allows for a healthy body. The body is hence to be put in close relation with all human experiences including quality of interpersonal relationships, quality of the relations to the environment and game, and quality of relations to the deceased and the spirits. Regarding the last point, dreams, for example, are still considered most important, according to the elders.

In fact, health is conceived less as a personal matter, as in Western societies, than as a harmonious order in which the person is integrated in an encompassing social, temporal, spiritual and non-empirical environment. Conversely, when elders differentiate between body and mind, they tend to underline their complementarity and to stress their close interrelationship, because every person is linked to a broader physical, animal and social environment. If mind and body are so deeply bound together, it can then be easily understood why biological disorders are often interpreted as the expression of social-order deterioration. One can also understand why Inuit still consider an animal substance such as seal oil as having both the ability to energize the body by warming it up and to prevent or heal many health problems. According to the
elders, seal oil appears essential for health, especially because “marine mammal oil is well recognized by the body” and, on a larger scale, because seal oil plays a key role in Inuit tradition:

Seal oil is still used today. Amongst all the animals, the seal is the most useful. Although the seal is really small compared to some animals, it is extremely useful. It is the most abundant. It is easier to catch than many other animals. Its blubber is used for food, and for heat. Seal oil is used to waterproof kamiik and of course for healing. (Tipuula Qaapik Atagutsiak)

As a rule, providing specific desired foods to a sick person was considered very helpful in the past:

For example, if a sick person desired aged meat or fish, even if they didn’t have any personally, the family would seek what the person wanted to eat from neighbours. Once they ate what they wanted, they would start getting better slowly. (Ilisapi Ootoova)

The elders’ testimonies also suggest that most Inuit therapeutic treatments are based on a principal of opposites. In other words, sickness is said to come from outside the body and travel through the body, *narunlattijuq*; any therapeutic treatment therefore implies the coming out of the offensive element. In order to be successful, healing requires at least two main conditions:

- extraction of the offensive element from the body (or the need to talk to a reliable person in case of depression)
- rehabilitation of the sick person in the community and eventually among the ancestors (human or spirits).

All elders agree on the relation between physical disorders and absence of communication:

**Tipuula:** Having things pass out of the body has always been a good sign. If a woman was having pain in her uterus and nothing came out, that was a bad sign. Even if the woman felt embarrassed, she needed to tell someone. It is the same thing with a stomach-ache. If something started to come out it was a good sign. It was okay not to tell anyone they were in pain if something was coming out. If nothing was coming out and they were in pain, they needed to tell someone about it. It could be dangerous if
nothing passed out of the body. If our urine or feces change in some way, we need to tell someone about it. If we tell someone about it it is less scary. Once the sickness had passed out of the body, the person could recover.

Ilisapi: These days if someone excretes blood, it is considered dangerous. I do not agree with that myself. I think that it is a good sign.

*If a person is depressed and does not talk about it, do they just get worse?*

Tipuula: Yes, it is similar to what we were just talking about. The pain they are feeling mentally has to come out before they can start healing. Our mind is part of our body as well, so it is similar.

What we call “Inuit medical knowledge” refers to much more than healing techniques, as it concerns an extensive knowledge not only of the human body but of the personhood, the body being conceived as a whole in relation with its social environment. The way Inuit cope with depression is based on such a principle, since the family try to maintain a cheerful atmosphere to help the depressed person.

**Passing down knowledge orally**

As elders say, all these conceptions, rules and techniques concerning ways of developing a strong mind and a healthy body were passed down orally:

The way I see it today, we elders seem to be hiding in the stem of a pipe. We only come out when we are asked to help and meet with others and then we go back into the pipe again. We need to write our traditions down, even though in the past we passed them on orally. Qallunaat have a lot of written information about their history. We Inuit should start writing things down too so that our knowledge is not forgotten and it is passed on. This knowledge has to be passed on so people know about these things. (Akisu Joamie)

In this perspective, shared memory was and still is highly praised, even though some past beliefs and behaviours may no longer be seen as necessary, as illustrated by the following examples:

- The elders said that even though in the past young people were not allowed to ask questions or to express their opinion freely, silence is no longer always required as a sign of respect.
A female elder showed distance towards the past by expressing her personal reluctance to talk about spirits, arguing how skeptical she was about many beliefs, even though students were eager to hear about old sayings.

All the women criticized ritual food prohibitions imposed in the past before and after pregnancy, and said how grateful they were to missionaries who contributed to putting an end to these rules.

The elders refrained from showing an authoritarian attitude; they were tolerant and never criticized the younger generation for not following all the traditional rules or for not respecting all the traditional norms and values.

**Value of experience and need for restoring practices**

Despite the fact that they do not reject Western medicine as a whole, elders and students expressed the need for restoring traditional practices still considered essential for their well-being:

> There are people around who think differently, but I think it is best if we follow the advice our mothers gave us, so that we don’t run into problems. If we follow our mothers’ advice it is better, because their advice is based on experience. We should listen to our mothers, so that we don’t encounter anything that becomes too difficult to handle. (Ilisapi Ootoova)

> What we are discussing makes me remember that I should give an attati, a specific amulet to be carried all the time, to Simiuni my grandchild. It worked for us. It was part of Inuit culture and had a purpose. (Aalasi Joamie)

Everyone was also eager to restore the practice of predicting the future of a newborn, as it helps the child in developing the predicted qualities.

Regrets were expressed that Inuit knowledge is not more recognized. Most medical doctors, social workers, and teachers are not even aware of elders’ knowledge. Students said how grateful they were for what was passed down, stating that they would like to raise their children in the manner described by the elders. They felt the time had come for restoring knowledge because alternatives have to be found for dealing with complex personal and social aspects of life. As Ilisapi Ootoova put it:

> Today, life seems so simple. It seems that everything is too available. People today are in a dangerous situation because everything is too easy.
Therefore, more than ever, there is room for Inuit wisdom, *silatujuq*. According to the *Tununiq Dialect Dictionary* (2001) this word refers to “someone who is knowledgeable, calm and aware of their surroundings.” The Inuit definition of what we call wisdom is different than what is called wisdom in Western societies. More specifically, elders expressed their conviction that a healthy body and a strong mind must be thought of in relationship to all the components of the universe. Tradition is described not as a dead past but as a force able to give answers for the present.

Tradition is transmitted through a selective process where each part of tradition considered useful has a good chance of surviving through time. What has proved to be efficient in the past may apply to a new context. This is especially true when focus is put on strengthening the mind and keeping the body resistant to illness. The past generations’ ability “not to panic in difficult situations” is also of major importance in modern contexts, according to both elders and students.

**The power of words**

Even though the elders in this book do not concentrate on how shamanic words contributed to facilitate birth or healing in the past (see Rasmussen, 1929; 1930; 1931: 278-293; 1932: 113-118), they strongly emphasize the power of words. First, they strengthen a child’s mind, which is why parents must always praise their children: “*uqausiqtigut piujukuutiginginnaragoonut,*” “We have to let them know verbally they are important to us.” Words also have the power to help a distressed person by disclosing something troublesome. An elder recalled how her mother was often asked, even during the night, to visit another camp where somebody needed to confide in someone. Today, we would say that the person needed “spiritual healing” even if this is not exactly the way it is put in Inuktitut. Referring to midwifery, and taking place in a Christianized context, the following story suggests the power of prayer:

I have revived a baby more than once. I guess, if it is not their time to die, they live. The baby was completely lifeless.

I held the baby’s feet and folded and unfolded the baby’s legs trying to match the intervals of a baby’s breathing. I was moving the stomach around but there was completely no pulse in the intestinal area. I repeated what I had been doing and when I checked the tummy again I felt a pulse. So I said, “Let’s say a prayer.” First I said the Lord’s Prayer, then the ‘Glory Be’ and then I said all the prayers I could remember. After that, I again repeated what I had been doing and the tummy started to move.

It took almost an hour to get the baby breathing again. (Tipuula Qaapik Atagutsiak)
Some words are also still credited with having negative power. Therefore they can destroy a person and even shorten someone’s life. Every one has to be cautious: language, as an elder put it, must not be abused.

**The courses**

The information contained in this book was recorded during a three-week course in 1997 and during an additional week’s session devoted to medicinal plants in 1998. After having been introduced to the content of a few documents related to traditional health (see references), the students started conducting their own interviews. An outline of the method and the philosophy behind this course can be found in *Interviewing Inuit Elders: Introduction* (Iqaluit, 1999). As in the former courses, interviews were conducted in an informal setting, each session focussing on a specific topic, and allowing the students to connect their own experiences and questions to those of the elders. During the first two weeks, three North Baffin elders were invited: Ilisapi Ootoova from Mittimatalik (Pond Inlet), Tirisi Ijjangiaq from Igdlulik and Tipuula Qaapik Atagutsiak from Ikpiarjuk (Arctic Bay). During the last week, three South Baffin elders were invited: Aalasi Joamie, Akisu Joamie and Jaikku Pitseolak, all now residents of Iqaluit. The students were: Susan Palluq Enuaraq, Myna Ishulutak, Nancy Saullu Kisa, Bernice Kootoo, Jeannie Shaimayuk, Julia Saimaiyuq, and Eena Alivaqtaq. By that time, most of them had already participated in the 1996 Oral Tradition course.

The last session in 1998 was slightly different, but still oriented towards health, through discussions pertaining to the use of medicinal plants with two elders from Iqaluit, Malaija Papatsie and Jaikku Pitseolak (Ann Mikijjuk Hanson joined the group for half a day). The students had the opportunity to visit Malaija’s qammaq, identifying plants in the area but also learning the best ways to light a *qulliq*, a seal oil lamp, by mixing two well-known plants: *suputit* and *maniq*. The students were: Elisapi Ikkidluak, Aatami Paniaq, Vera Qulaut Arnatsiaq, Hanna Oolayou, Mathieu Boki, Lavaani Aakulujuk, Eileen Kilabuk, Linda Lia Apalialuk, and Sheepa Nowyuk. Jane Tagak, who joined the group, brought over many species of plants.

**Sharing knowledge**

During the course, the students were not the only ones learning. The following extract clearly illustrates the ongoing dynamic:

*You are teaching us a lot.*

**Akisu:** You in turn are teaching us a lot.

**Aalasi:** Yes, we are learning a lot of things from you too. You are not the only ones learning.
Jaikku: You are helping us to remember.

Aalasi: We have a better idea about what we should teach. It makes us realize what young people today want to learn.

Jaikku: We are talking to you about things that we would not ordinarily speak of, things we just think about in our hearts, both good and bad. It makes us feel a lot better. This is how we are supposed to help one another.

Aalasi: Words have always been cleansing. Words are what has made us Inuit. Words are very important.

Format of the book

As the purpose of the course was to focus as far as possible on Inuit perspectives regarding traditional medical knowledge, we did not discuss Western notions. Our approach was to follow the elders’ testimonies and let the students conduct their own interviews. Therefore, in the book itself, we did not change much of the order in which the topics were introduced and discussed. As in the other books of this series, we have kept the dialogue form in order to allow the reader to see how the knowledge of the elders takes shape in an interplay of questions and answers. Nevertheless, we did not retain all the dialogues between elders and students while they were discussing the medicinal use of plants, but kept only the main parts, for the sake of clarity. We have also preserved two short digressions resulting from students’ questions on angakkuniq, shamanism (see Appendix) and songs (see Conclusion), which always come out in discussions with elders.

The North Baffin elders discussed two main issues:

• Diagnoses and treatments used to heal a sick body;
• Cultural representations and Inuit answers regarding the close relationship between physical disorders and mental states.

The South Baffin elders explored four issues extensively:

• aanniasiitigijauqaktuviniit, materials used for healing; and delivery;
• mamisajusituqait, Inuit counselling and healing practices;
• Importance of thoughts, feelings and words;
• **piruqtuit**, exploration of Inuit knowledge concerning medicinal plants.

In adopting such a structure, we want to acknowledge the wide range of Inuit traditions concerning medical knowledge and therapeutic practices. We also wish the reader to be able to discover the diversity of Inuit traditions as well as the recurrent patterns. Conversely, we hope that the reader will not reduce Inuit medical knowledge to a set of techniques used to cure sickness, but will place this knowledge within a dynamic cosmology as well as within a dynamic notion of personhood.

We wish to thank Alexina Kublu and Susan Sammons for both the translation and transcription of many of the interviews, as well as Sally Mikijjuk and Roberta Roberts for keyboarding. A special thanks to Deborah Qitsualik who interpreted during the course and to Nina Manning, Maaki Kakkik and Eileen Kilabuk who did much of the original translation. Thanks are also due to Andrew Tagak for proofreading the Inuktitut version of this book and to Marja Korhonen and Noel McDermott for proofreading the English. Our gratitude goes to the elders who know so well how to share knowledge along with cheerfulness.

Frédéric Laugrand
Michèle Therrien
Part One

Tununirmiut
Elders
(North Baffin)
Sick Body: Diagnoses and Treatments

Cuts and wounds

*When a seal was caught, was the blubber saved so that it could be used for medicinal purposes, such as for covering wounds?*

**Ilisapi:** When we caught a seal, we did not just think of cuts and wounds. What we thought of first was oil for the *qulliq*, the lamp, as that was our only source of heat. The thin layer beneath the blubber would be saved for the dogs. The blubber around the flippers was saved entirely for the lamp. Oil would also be used as ear drops for children with earaches to help them feel better. If a wound was too dry, oil would be applied to keep it moist. I do not know how this was done as I was born after *qallunaat* were already present. Sometimes, when new skin was being formed over a wound and it cracked, oil was applied. It was also applied to skin that had been sunburnt. We would not put much on; just enough to keep the skin from cracking. We grew up around the R.C.M.P. base so we had ointment. If it was packed away in the sled, then we would use seal oil to protect our skin from cracking while we were travelling.

*Did you have to boil it first?*

**Ilisapi:** No. When you touch blubber it is quite oily. We would use it like that.

**Tirisi:** You just rub it on. Just make sure you do not apply too much.

**Ilisapi:** You have not asked about this, but bearded seal oil was the best oil to apply to wounds or infected areas that took a long time to heal. Part of the blubber, the *tangiq*, would be used as a bandaid on the infected area. We know that ringed seals eat krill and cod but the bearded seal has a different diet. Because animals have different diets there is a difference in the oil made from their blubber. Some oils used in the *qulliq* had a brighter flame than others. Some flames were red. Some oils produced higher flames. The difference in the oils was based on the food the animal had eaten.

**Tirisi:** We learned this because we used oil constantly.
When in the year was the oil at its best, in the winter or in the spring? Was the oil basically the same all year round?

Ilisapi: It was basically the same all year round though we seemed to use more of it in the spring when we applied it to dry skin. The other basic use for oil was for earaches in the winter. There were fewer children back then compared to today. There weren't very many children with earaches.

Tirisi: Nowadays, it seems like children have earaches all the time.

How did you use oil to treat an earache?

Ilisapi: You used the tip of a feather to apply the drops. We would get unused oil from the lamp, apply two drops in the ear and let it sit for a while. We could probably still use that remedy today if the Health Centre happened to be closed.

Tirisi: Earaches often occurred in the middle of the night.

Ilisapi: They tended to happen during the night.

Tirisi: These days you can also use store-bought oil for ear drops if a child is crying from an earache.

Ilisapi: The blubber was pounded and some oil was saved to be used for paluagq, not for the lamp. It was good clean oil that had not been aged at all. We used seal oil in our paluagq too.

Was whale oil used for similar purposes?

Ilisapi: They tried not to use whale oil. We children did not know why but our mothers did. When a whale was freshly caught, it would be cut up and we would eat. If we got a cut while eating it, the cut tended to swell up and get itchy. I think that whale oil is quite strong so it was never used for earaches. We did not use it on our faces as it had a powerful stench. When it was used for the lamp, the flame tended to be higher and it really heated up our dwelling. It really brightened it up. After we used up the whale oil, we would use seal oil. It would be a lot darker and the flame was really red. Our dwelling would not be as warm.

Tirisi: The flame would be really low.
They didn’t use whale oil to treat wounds?

Ilisapi: If it was too fresh, it could cause swelling. It didn’t cause a lot of swelling, but there was some swelling nevertheless. The edge of the wound also tended to be itchy. We didn’t exactly have a means to test this, but we could see the effects on the wound.

Tirisi: We knew it had side effects so it was not used on wounds.

Was it applied to infected areas?

Ilisapi: Bearded seal blubber would be applied. The blubber would be applied as a bandaid once the oil from the blubber had been removed.

Tirisi: The blubber would be scraped so that the oil was removed completely. Then it would be applied. It did not have to be dry when applied as long as it was flat.

What do you mean by nilamingajuq?

Ilisapi: Nilamingajuq is when something is laid out completely flat. Some of our words differ because of our dialects.

Tirisi: Yes, even though we know of other terms, we tend to use the ones from our own dialect.

That is fine. We will learn more that way. What was better for medicinal purposes, bearded seal oil or whale oil?

Ilisapi: Even today bearded seal oil is preferred. Whale oil is not used at all for wounds. Back then, before we had snowmobiles and firearms, we could not travel as far or as quickly as we do today, and it was not every day that a bearded seal was caught. There were times when we needed bearded seal oil and we didn’t have any. Some people lived in areas where bearded seal was rarely caught, even though they might catch ringed seal regularly. Even though we did not have to pay for it, sometimes it was hard to get bearded seal oil.

Was polar bear fat used as well?

Ilisapi: It was mostly used to oil men’s black kamiik in our area.
The kamiik that are waterproof?
Ilisapi: Polar bear fat was applied to the stitching and to the rest of the kamiik. They tended to be waterproof if the fat was applied. The stitches also did not stiffen up as much.

Tirisi: The fat softened them up.

Ilisapi: They would softenn anyway with regular use. You turned them inside out when you put them out to dry. Because they were constantly being put outside to dry they would soften up naturally. It was said that polar bear fat was not as oily as yellow oil.

What do you mean by yellow oil?
Ilisapi: If you get seal oil on clothing it tends to turn it yellow. Polar bear fat does not turn clothing as yellow.

Was polar bear fat used for the lamp too?
Ilisapi: That was possible. If oil was needed it could be used too.

Was it ever used on wounds?
Ilisapi: Yes.

Tirisi: If it was the only oil available, it was probably used on dry skin. I do not know if it was used very often.

There was a time down south, when women used fat from a brown bear on their hair.
Ilisapi: That was not our custom. We did not apply oil on our hair. We didn't want oil on our hair at all. I have heard of people washing their hair with caribou blood. Have you ever heard of that?

Tirisi: Yes. After it dried it was nice and clean.

Did the hair turn a shade of red?
Tirisi: It would at first. After the blood dried, it was rinsed out. It looked as if there had never been any blood on it.
Ilisapi: Do you know the term itikpaktumik?

Does it mean someone who is dirty?

Ilisapi: Maybe you do not really know how dirty hair could get back then. People used to have really dirty hair back then, some more than others. When they were combing their hair it was not smooth, it would feel very sticky. If women had long hair it would brush into things. Because people didn’t wash very often, their hair looked like they had been sweating.

They would take caribou blood and lather it into the hair. Once the blood was dry and had peeled, the dirt was removed with it. In our area there weren’t many caribou, so our hair was often dirty.

Did they check to see if a seal was male or female before they used the oil for ear drops?

Ilisapi: No. No one ever even thought about that, unless the seals were in rut because they are very stinky then.

Does a seal in rut, a tiggaq, smell bad?

Ilisapi: Some seals that are rutting have this stench about them. Some do not. We did not use rutting seals if we had a choice. We didn’t really want to use them for oil because they had an awful stench, even though the flame was fine.

Was bearded seal oil used on infected skin?

Ilisapi: We didn’t have skin infections very often. Once in a while someone would get an infection from a large wound. Sometimes you could tell if a wound was likely to become infected. That was when oil was used. It has been only recently that infections have become part of everyday life. Around 1940, almost everyone got skin infections.

Tirisi: Basically everyone had a skin infection.

Ilisapi: People became itchy all over the place, even us. I wonder what it was.

Tirisi: I don’t know. This happened all over.

Did people treat it with seal oil?

Ilisapi: We did not try treating it with seal oil. We were given medication from the Anglican Mission and the R.C.M.P. They were the ones that took care of our medical
needs. The medication looked like pills. The pills were dissolved in water. We were told to wash ourselves with this water as a lotion. This solution was not used to heal the infection, but to ease the pain.

Tirisi: We tried to keep the infected skin from cracking.

Ilisapi: Yes. We eventually healed and so we are okay today.

Did everyone have skin infections at the same time?
Tirisi: Even though people lived in different camps, everyone had the skin infection at the same time.

Even though you hadn’t had visitors from another area, you all had a skin infection at the same time?
Ilisapi: It didn’t seem to have come from other people.

It didn’t appear as though you were infecting each other?
Ilisapi: People thought it was from the air. After the war was over some people thought that this might have been caused by a bomb blast. It was some time later that people thought that it may have been from a bomb blast.

Back then did young girls reaching adolescence have pimples?
Ilisapi: We did not have pimples; our skin was flawless.

Tirisi: It is different today. Young girls’ skin is different. Maybe they wash it too much?

Ilisapi: Maybe it’s from the air. We did not go out of our way to make ourselves pretty. We did not apply oil to ourselves. Are pimples a sign of reaching puberty?

I am not sure what pimples are from. Young girls who are reaching puberty have pimples.
Tirisi: I didn’t know that either.

When their breasts start forming, young girls start getting pimples.
Elders: Really?
When we were studying the uses for seal, we learned that eating seal can help the body to stay warm. Was eating seal meat used as a way of retaining heat?

Ilisapi: It is not only seal meat, although seal is the best. Although we might get just as full eating animals that graze, they don’t generate as much body warmth. When you eat animals from the sea you can start sweating, even when you are not exerting yourself.

Tirisi: Probably eating the blubber generates heat as well.

Are the animals from the sea called puijiit?

Ilisapi: It is because they come up for air from the sea that they are called puijiit.

Was oil from seal pups used as well?

Ilisapi: Absolutely. It was used too. The Anglican minister would take the blubber from seal pups and cut it up into little pieces and boil it to get oil. When you do this, this is called iktitaq. He would collect the oil and make it into soap. The minister had something he added to the oil himself to make soap.

It never became gummy?

Ilisapi: I don’t think it became gummy. I think the minister experimented until he found which oil was best to use.

Tirisi: It is just oil. After the blubber is cooked, no water is added.

Ilisapi: If tallow was made from caribou fat, this was called igittitaq.

After you scraped the fat off the blubber, was anything done with what was left over?

Ilisapi: This was called kiliuq. We scraped it with a saliguut, a scraper that did not have a sharp edge. When all the oil had been removed then it was dried. Because of the potential for food to become scarce, we learned to eat everything and anything we could.

Tirisi: We enjoyed the taste even when it was uncooked.
Did you make sure a person was well fed with seal meat before they left on a journey, so that they would stay warm?

Ilisapi: We always ate a lot of meat. We did not have qallunaat food. The only foreign foods we had were tea, sugar and bannock. We would only depart after we had eaten. Even a child, if he was going along on a hunt, would be fed, even if he didn’t feel like eating because he had just woken up.

Tirisi: They would make the child eat so he would be warm for the day.

Ilisapi: When people were out hunting they would not eat all day if they did not have a Coleman stove. Even if they had a stove, if they were serious about hunting, they would not take a break as food was not on their mind while there was daylight. If you had meat in your stomach, you did not get hungry as easily.

Did little boys have large appetites?

Ilisapi: Yes. Even we adults would work up an appetite when we were outside all day, especially if we hadn’t eaten since morning. When we got home and there was an aroma of boiled meat, it smelled so good.

Were there any overweight people back then?

Ilisapi: There were not really any overweight people. It seemed everyone was of average weight. Men were never overweight, I guess from constantly being busy. Today it is entirely different.

Were people advised not to eat too much seal meat when they had diarrhea?

Ilisapi: They would try and think of ways to help them. The flippers of the seal would be boiled until they softened. You would eat the flippers including the fur. That is how they would stop diarrhea.

Tirisi: The furry part is what would harden the stool.

If someone had a deep cut, did you soak it in oil before you stitched it up?

Tirisi: Yes. After the bleeding stopped we stitched it up.

Ilisapi: You didn’t soak it in oil, you just applied a little on the cut.
Tirisi: Either that, or a bandaid made from caribou skin would be stitched on. A little piece of blubber was put in it to keep the wound from drying up.

*Was it alright to use a piece of seal blubber that wasn’t fresh?*

**Tirisi:** As long as it was not rancid it could be used. As long as the bandaid that was made stayed in place it healed well.

**Ilisapi:** If the cut was on the finger tips they made a casing for it. You would sew a softened piece of caribou skin without the fur, and put it on and bind it with sinew.

**Tirisi:** Usually blubber would be put at the tip of the bandaid, but this was not always the case.

*If a person got a big cut, did they stitch it up?*

**Tirisi:** You did not actually stitch it up, but you made sure that the wound was closed so that it would heal properly.

*Was the bandaid quite tight? Was oil applied once or did you apply it often?*

**Tirisi:** Oil was only applied if it started to dry out.

**Ilisapi:** One would attempt to remove the excess liquid from the wound by soaking it in oil first, before reapplying the bandaid.

*Was bearded seal oil used on wounds?*

**Ilisapi:** We found bearded seal oil to be the best.

*Does bearded seal oil heal faster than ringed seal oil?*

**Ilisapi:** If a cut is infected, we know that it can be healed with bearded seal oil. Although this was used in the past, it can still be useful today. We tried different things. If a cut wasn’t healing properly, bearded seal oil would help it heal faster.

*My son has a rash. Maybe bearded seal oil would help it heal faster?*

**Ilisapi:** You should apply it on the rash without using soap first and if that doesn’t work apply it after using soap to see what works better.
Maybe my son would smell like puja, gummy seal oil. When someone was pregnant, did they have to refrain from eating raw seal meat in the days of pittailiniq?

Ilisapi: Yes, that is what our ancestors did.

The blood and nutrition

Nowadays when one’s hemoglobin is low, eating raw meat is recommended in the diet.

Ilisapi: One could not tell if the hemoglobin was low back then as there was no means of determining that. In the past a pregnant woman was not allowed to eat raw meat. She was only allowed to eat boiled meat, but it didn’t have to be well done. She was not allowed to eat animals from the land and animals from the sea on the same day. It had to be decided at the beginning of the day whether it was going to be a land animal or a sea animal that was going to be eaten.

Tirisi: That must have been bothersome.

Ilisapi: Yes, but they had to abide by the rules. My mother did not practice that, but my grandmother had to. Maybe Tirisi’s mother had to practice that. When ministers arrived, this practice was stopped. Thanks to that, we can now eat anything.

Have you heard that eating seal meat can lessen a headache?

Ilisapi: No. We only know that one does not have an appetite when one feels sick. The sick person would be fed small bites of either caribou or seal so that they might get better. When they wanted something specific such as a ptarmigan or a rabbit, they would be fed that and they would recover faster. Even those who were sick for a long time would be fed what they wanted to eat.

Tirisi: Even today they are still fed what they ask for.

Ilisapi: For example, if a sick person desired aged meat or fish, even if they didn’t have any personally, the family would seek what the person wanted to eat from neighbours. Once they ate what they wanted, they would start getting better slowly. Today it seems that once people get sick, they seem to die all the time.

Tirisi: Yes. That is how it is.
Ilisapi: Back in the old days, even when people were really ill, they often recovered.

Tirisi: Yes. Even though they had no strength for a while they would get better.

Ilisapi: They were so weak they had to be cared for by others. When they started eating what they wanted, they slowly started to recover. Even if it took days, they eventually got better. My father's nose bled for approximately one week and nobody could stop it. He would put pieces of blubber in his nostrils way deep inside.

Were both nostrils bleeding or just one?

Ilisapi: Both nostrils were bleeding. He was so weak that my mother had to assist him when he went to the bathroom. He eventually started to do things on his own and he completely recovered. It seemed as if he lost most of his blood. When his nose started to bleed at first, it was red. Then it became clear because he had lost so much blood. Then he started to recover.

When a person was losing a lot of blood, did they give them food to eat?

Ilisapi: When a person had lost a lot of blood, they lost their appetites just like a sick person. If they were tasting so much blood that they did not want to eat, they were given a lot of water.

Did the water have to be lukewarm?

Ilisapi: Yes. When I had my third child I lost a lot of blood. We were living in an outpost camp quite far from the community. I lost a lot of blood to the point that I passed out. I thought that I was dying. I would pass out, and when I would come to, a wet cloth would be applied. Then I would see nothing but blackness again. Even my tongue turned white as there was no blood left. I slept for a while. I would wake up and I would feel a bit better. I would attempt to sit up and when I sat up, my heart beat really fast.

I do not understand the term qaulluqtuq?

Ilisapi: Qaulluqtuq, means white. It is the same as qakuqtuq. I recovered from my loss of blood. People can recover even though they are not in a hospital. I do not know what makes us recover. I am not the only one that has recovered from this.

Some experiences are awful.

Ilisapi: Yes.
Did you have to drink a lot of water when you lost a lot of blood?
Ilisapi: Yes. My mother-in-law would give me plenty of water as she wanted me to have some breast milk as well.

All you had was water?
Ilisapi: I eventually was able to eat, even though I had no appetite. I felt really sick. I ate little pieces, even though the food tasted awful. Blood is an essential part of the human body.

Even though you had lost a lot of blood, were you still breastfeeding?
Ilisapi: Yes.

Your face must have been really pale.
Ilisapi: Yes, I heard that it was. I was quite pale. Even the upper part of my body was pale. It was different from the rest. We have to look for alternatives if the Health Centre is closed. If we are out where there is no Health Centre, we have to do things the way we used to. If someone is losing a lot of blood, you have to remember that they can recover. You shouldn't assume the person is going to die.

If the person was drinking warm water they would survive?
Ilisapi: Yes.

Lice
I have heard that bearded seal oil was used to prevent people from getting lice.
Tirisi: I have never heard this.

Ilisapi: It seemed as if the lice came on their own, not from anywhere in particular. If we had a boarder that had a lot of lice, they could certainly be passed on. Even though we had our own share of lice, we could still catch more from a boarder.

Tirisi: Yes, we were all different. Even though I too had lice, someone else could have even more lice.

Ilisapi: Those who had good homes and were well taken care of by their parents and who didn't go hungry had less lice than others. That is how we were. My father hated lice. Even though we had lice, others seemed to have more than we did. Some were less
fortunate and tried their best to have a warm place. They had a lot more lice than we
did. My father would advise us not to visit places where there were a lot of lice so that
we would not catch more, even though we had our own share of lice.

*Were the lice eggs broken with the teeth?*
*Ilisapi:* Yes. They were also squashed with the fingernails.

*That is what was done to lice from seals. Was that done to human lice
as well?*
*Ilisapi:* We were not really like that. Some children did not want to touch lice at all. They
did not want to touch anything that had blood in it. Myself, that did not really bother
me at all. I used to squash lice with my teeth.

*You must have had a lot of fun with lice.*
*Ilisapi:* It was fun to hear them pop!

*Did you eat them?*
*Ilisapi:* We would spit them out. My older sister used to tell my parents that I ate lice.
My older sister and I were completely different. My sister was really squeamish about
lice. Myself, I did not really care.

*How do you think they managed to get rid of lice?*
*Ilisapi:* I have no idea.

*Was there really a lot of lice?*
*Ilisapi:* Not all the time. Sometimes the lice would go away temporarily.

*When the lice fell, did they live in your clothing?*
*Ilisapi:* They did not fall off. Head lice and clothing lice are not the same; head lice are
black and clothing lice are white. Well, they were somewhat whiter.

*Did clothing have lice too?*
*Ilisapi:* We didn’t have them all over. Maybe they tended to live where it was warmer.
Did lice have nits?
Ilisapi: They must have nits in order to have descendants.

Did you crack the nits too?
Ilisapi: Yes. It was often our mothers who took care of that. My mother would wash my hair. My mother used to take more care of my sister and I than other mothers did. We had less lice than others.

Tirisi: Some people had a lot of lice. Some even used to have their hair cut right at the nape of the neck.

Ilisapi: Even girls used to be given hair cuts to try and reduce the number of lice in their hair.

The use of seal oil for medicinal purposes
Let me go back to the subject of seals. I am getting kind of itchy! If people were vomiting a lot, did they refrain from eating seal meat?
Ilisapi: It was not very often that people became quite ill. Sometimes when a woman was pregnant, she would not feel like eating.

Tirisi: Some were quick to vomit when they were sick.

Ilisapi: Yes. When women were in the early stages of pregnancy, some would tend to vomit right away. Pregnant women tended to vomit, even though they would eat regularly, even though they were not sick.

How was heartburn treated?
Ilisapi: It seemed that people would only get heartburn from eating palaugaq. People did not seem to get heartburn from eating meat.

Some pregnant women seem to have a lot of heartburn.
Ilisapi: I don’t know why some people have heartburn a lot. Back then women were not pregnant very often; maybe they did not have sex as frequently.

Tirisi: Some children were quite big by the time they had a younger sibling.
Ilisapi: I was one of the first to start to have children quite frequently. Now there are so many children.

Was seal blubber used for medicinal purposes? I know you mentioned the flippers earlier, but was the oil used as well?

Ilisapi: Yes, I think so. Some would use plants such as the moss we used for the lamp. It would be used by those who were having heartburn even if they were not pregnant. The ones who had heartburn would attempt to use the moss to help them. Puffballs would also be used as band-aids. When the wound or the cut tended to be wet, puffballs would be applied on the wound. Eventually the wound would dry up and heal.

Was this done without applying oil?

Ilisapi: Yes. You would apply the puffball without adding oil.

Does seal oil sting the skin when it is applied to a wound?

Ilisapi: It can soothe the stinging sensations. Some people used to apply urine to the wound if it was bleeding a lot.

Tirisi: Some people used to do this.

Ilisapi: I guess mostly men did this. If a man got a cut, he would urinate on a wound if it was bleeding excessively.

Tirisi: This would probably cause the wound to sting.

Ilisapi: If the urine was warm, the bleeding would stop.

It must be hard to try to urinate on a wound. I recall someone dipping his wound into some urine.

Ilisapi: Some would dip the wound into urine and some would urinate directly on the wound. One would urinate into a clean container, not the container that was used regularly to urinate in. It is amazing how this would really slow down the bleeding.

I wonder if seal oil is still used from time to time to heal wounds?

Ilisapi: I don't think so. Since we have started to live like qallunaat, I think we turn our noses up at seal oil. It does not take very much for us to notice an aroma we do not like, especially if it is not an aroma connected to qallunaat.
Did wounds ever get infected?
Ilisapi: Wounds would be well tended to so that they would heal properly.

When seal oil was applied, did the wound tend to heal faster?
Ilisapi: If the wound took a long time to heal, the scar tended to be large. If the wound healed quickly, it would be really thin. Oil would be applied regularly so the scar would not be as big.

Did a wound take a long time to heal in the past, or was it the same as today?
Ilisapi: It tended to heal faster if it didn’t get infected. If the wound got infected, it could take a long time to heal. They did not require trips to the hospital in Iqaluit. If a leg was broken this did not require a trip to the hospital either.

Tirisi: Yes. When a leg was broken, the person was not required to leave the community. Some type of splint would be applied to hold it in place. I know a person who had a broken arm. He was a male adult. A piece of wood was applied and bound with a belt which was not too narrow, and he waited for it to heal. He was injured in April. A bowhead whale was caught before June, and he was strong enough to hold a knife and help to butcher it.

Is the term for broken bone navittuq?
Ilisapi: Yes, but nowadays we hear people saying nakattuq, as though it had come off.

Would it be bound?
Ilisapi: The broken arm would be bound. Fingers would not be bound if they could be moved.

Could they pull the bone back into place without doing any more damage?
Ilisapi: They would put it into place by pulling on it.

Tirisi: You had to make sure it was in place.

Ilisapi: That is the type of thing we used to do. We also fixed dislocated joints.
How did you deal with a person who was in great pain while working on their injury? What were they given to ease the pain?

Tirisi: We would not give them anything to ease the pain. Once we had dealt with the injury, we gave the person something to eat.

Ilisapi: If the person had suffered a dislocation, they would be in great pain. The person would be in even more pain while the injury was being worked on. Once it was in place, all the person could do was wait for the pain to subside, as the pain could not get any worse than it was already. When someone is sent out to Iqaluit, the person is in a lot of pain. If the injury cannot be dealt with in Iqaluit, then the person has to fly further to Montreal. He has to be given medication to ease the pain. The person would not be in as much pain if the joint was put in place the same evening. If a bone breaks, it tends to have jagged points. When it is put in place, a person would be in pain, but the pain would not get any worse. We can deal with difficult cases like that.

Is this how you worked on injuries like that?

Tirisi: Yes.

Ilisapi: Even at the Health Centre, Tirisi is often called upon for assistance.

When there is an injury in the leg, what do you do?

Tirisi: You have to pull on it. You have to determine where the dislocation is and pull on it while trying to put it back into place. It is really hard.

Does it require a lot of strength?

Tirisi: Yes. When you try and put it in place it is very painful.

What would be done if the ribs were broken?

Tirisi: We didn’t know how to deal with that. They would heal on their own.

Ilisapi: I once broke two ribs. You can feel the lump here.

Tirisi: You cannot fix ribs from the outside. It is really hard to deal with those.
Ilisapi: I was pregnant and when I coughed suddenly, I would be in a lot of pain. There was nothing my parents could do to help me but each day the pain would lessen. I was not in constant pain. It was only when I was in a certain position. I would be in a lot of pain when I turned my body.

How did it feel?
Ilisapi: It felt as if I was being poked with needles.

Midwifery and childbirth

Back then, were certain people called if someone broke a bone or was in labour?

Ilisapi: Back then, they would call certain people who were experienced in a particular field in an emergency. These would be people who could deal with a situation and did not easily faint. I would personally be called if a woman was in labour. If they wanted to call someone else who they felt more comfortable with, then that person would be called. Midwives would have expertise in dealing with women in labour. They would take really good care of them. Some nurses are like that and some are not. Women who were in labour were well taken care of by midwives. Some women tried to stay in the same position but if their contractions lessened the midwife would tell them to change their position. If the woman in labour was uncomfortable, the midwife would advise her to stay in that position if the contractions remained strong.

The midwife would try and keep her in pain?

Ilisapi: This was done so the delivery would be faster. The woman would be positioned so that she was uncomfortable so the baby would come sooner. It was not very often that labour would carry on to the next day. Some would deliver their babies quite quickly.

A woman in labour was not allowed to be comfortable?

Ilisapi: She was not allowed to be comfortable, but the midwife would keep a close eye on the woman in labour. She would make sure her legs were positioned properly. She would make sure her legs were not spread too wide. The midwife would keep the position of the spine in mind, as well as the tail bone. The spine is connected to the pelvic area so they paid attention to this.

Someone would be positioned behind the woman in labour. If she arched her back, the woman behind her would straighten her back. She would be in so much pain she would not be thinking of what position her body was in. Likewise, if she bent over too much the woman behind her would also straighten her back. They would keep her body
straight so she would not damage her bones. We didn’t worry about the baby that was going to be delivered. All we did was wait for it to come out. Our attentions were on the mother in labour. After having delivered a number of times, you tend to pay more attention to the position of your body with each passing labour.

I was aware of the position of my own body without being advised about it. I could make sure that I was not bent over too much. Once the baby was out, only then was attention paid to it. I could not deal with the baby myself, as I tended to faint at the sight of blood. Even when I cut myself, I tended to faint. When my son was a little boy he was like that too. Did that ever happen to you?

You weren’t like that, were you?

Tirisi: I was not like that, although there are some people who do faint when they see the sight of blood.

Ilisapi: I have delivered eleven children, two in the hospital, and nine in the traditional way. I have delivered my children either lying down or in a squatting position. During my first delivery I did not know what to expect. I delivered lying down even though my mother wanted me to be in a squatting position, because I was so tired. The second time I delivered, I was in a squatting position, as I was with the one after that and the one after that. I have delivered twice lying down. When the nurse in Mittimalak found out that I was in labour, she came to see me. I was so embarrassed I stayed in the same position, so I was in labour for a long time. My labour started in the morning and when evening came I was still in the same position. I was afraid that she might come back. What was wrong with me! I was afraid she was going to come back and tell me I should be in this position or that position instead. Therefore, I was in labour for a long time with my ninth delivery. Someone came to visit me with my mother. She pressed a wooden tobacco container against my back. It was so painful it made me arch backwards. She put a chair behind me, sat down, pressed my back and spread my legs. Even though this was my ninth delivery, I kept my eyes closed. Once that woman was behind me, the baby came out right away. I was so grateful that woman came.

It seemed as if when the baby was about to come out it would go back in. When that woman came, it did not take very long for her to help me deliver the baby. I was happy. I was in a squatting position. Something was placed under my knees so that my hips remained level. There was a woman positioned behind me. There was something for me to rest my hands on. I am not sure how high the hand rest was.

When we were about to deliver, we would spread our legs just enough for the baby to come out. If we spread our legs too much, it might cause tearing. The midwives would make sure our hips were even. We were given something to hold on to. Our spine had to be straight so the cervix would be aligned for the baby to come out smoothly. The
umbilical cord would be tied and cut and once that was done the placenta would follow after. If a woman delivered lying down, she would have to change position and squat down for the placenta to come out. I do not like lying in a bloody spot. When you are squatting you do not have to change position for the placenta to come out. Once the placenta is out, you can move to a clean area.

I found that it is much better to give birth lying down. The baby comes out smoothly. When I delivered in the hospital, I thought it would be better if the nurses were not around constantly. I tended to close up when they were too near. The foot stirrups are painful too. It seems as if your kuutinnaak, your pelvis, is positioned the wrong way.

Tirisi: No wonder! The feet are positioned outward.

Ilisapi: Your uppatiik, buttocks, are supposed to be level while delivering. If you ever deliver without medical personnel around, make sure you deliver lying down. It is the best position for the muscles. When your spine is on a hard surface and your buttocks area is slightly lower, I think this is the best position you can deliver in. Have all of you only delivered in the hospital?

The first time I delivered was in a tent.

Ilisapi: Were you lying down on your side?

Yes.

Ilisapi: Who put you in that position?

My mother and my aunt. It was very painful. I was crying and I was really scared. I went into labour when I was six months pregnant while out on the land. We were picking berries while out caribou hunting when my labour pains started. Maybe I over-exerted myself; it was very scary.

Ilisapi: Is that the only child you have? Do you have any other children?

The child I delivered died when he was ten months old. I was picked up by helicopter and brought here to the hospital. I delivered after the medical people arrived at our tent. My mother and others assisted in the delivery.
Ilisapi: My mother-in-law was the only one who assisted me during my deliveries. I used to tell her, “Do not tell anybody else that I am in labour unless I get really scared. I am not scared right now.” I find it uncomfortable to be in labour when there are people around.

*I was exactly like that. When I was in the tent, it was very uncomfortable listening to people talking outside.*

Ilisapi to Tirisi: How many deliveries have you had?

Tirisi: Twelve.

Ilisapi: Did you give birth in an iglu? Myself, I never gave birth in an iglu as I tended to give birth in the spring. I often gave birth in a tent. One time my husband and I were out traveling with my father-in-law and I knew I was going to give birth soon. It wasn’t scary. We didn’t worry about how we were going to handle it.

Tirisi: That’s true. We didn’t even think about it.

Ilisapi: There was a time that my mother-in-law and I were both pregnant. I gave birth in February and she gave birth in April. I did not assist her at all, even though she was in labour in the same dwelling that I was.

*Did she deliver the baby on her own?*

Ilisapi: Her husband assisted her. I only went to her side after she gave birth. Her husband cut the umbilical cord and tied it. She took care of herself as she was aware that I fainted at the sight of blood back then. I helped deliver a baby at the Nursing Station in Mittimatalik some time later. I do not recall if I was asked to come and assist. I did not like the position the nurses had placed the woman in. They did not even consider how the woman’s spine, or hips or legs were positioned. All that mattered to them seemed to be the baby. Here the mother was in pain. Whether her hips and her tail bone were aligned was not even considered. Some women had difficulty walking after a delivery if their hips and tail bone were not aligned properly.

*I was unable to walk afterwards because I had moved around too much. I was fortunate to be able to walk again. I could not walk for a while.*

Ilisapi: Did you damage a bone?
No, but I still feel pain. Whenever I get pregnant, I feel a lot of pain in my back.

Ilisapi: Maybe some damage occurred in that area.

When a woman is in labour, she shouldn’t move around too much.

Ilisapi: You do not really have to stay still. It is very painful to be in labour but you should not stand up and jump around. Young women tend to move too much because they find it very painful. The people who were assisting a woman did all they could to help her deliver.

I do not think my mother and my aunt had any experience in delivering a baby. I was given advice by someone over the radio.

Ilisapi: Even though we were not nurses or doctors, we made sure that the woman in labour was comfortable. The positions of the bones were closely monitored as well as the woman’s insides. The woman would be advised to check herself to see if she has any tears after the delivery. If she happened to have a tear, it would be cleaned so that it would not get infected. Even if you can’t see it yourself you could tell if you had torn by feeling with your hands. The woman would be advised to check for any tears. She was well monitored as women looked after each other. On occasion, there were some women whose well-being was ignored as long as the baby was fine. Those women ended up in a lot of discomfort if they had a tear.

Tirisi: That’s true.

Ilisapi: The delivery seemed to be completed satisfactorily if the woman was well taken care of once the baby was delivered. There was one woman who had a tear. I guess we did not take enough care of her and she got a pelvic infection which caused swelling. We did not take the time to check her when we should have, so we had to deal with the consequences after she got an infection. Cuts and sores in the vaginal area are different from wounds we see on exposed skin. If you have an infection in this area it tends to get really swollen; therefore you need to be very careful.

How did you prevent this from happening?

Ilisapi: We would make sure that there wasn’t any blood or blood clots in the area. We weren’t that concerned about the tear but we made sure we did what we could to prevent infection.
What did women have to do when they got pregnant?

Ilisapi: We were advised to take naps during the day if we felt like sleeping. They didn’t want us to be really tired. Otherwise, we would be too sleepy when we went into labour. By the time our bellies were big, we were advised to keep busy as opposed to just sitting around.

Tirisi: We were advised not to be idle.

Ilisapi: We were advised to do what we were able to. We could either go out visiting or find some work to do that we enjoyed. We were also advised not to numaasuk for the sake of our baby.

What do you mean by numaasuktuq?

Ilisapi: Pregnant women should not numaasuktuq, be depressed. You shouldn’t let things bother you. You need to realize you are feeling differently because you are pregnant. We were advised to be happy, so that our baby-to-be would have a good life. There were no doctors that we could rely on. Some of us did not always listen to the advice we were given. We would go and get ice and here we were with really big bellies. When our elders found out we were getting ice, we would be advised against this, but when they were not looking we would do it again.

You would do that behind their backs?

Tirisi: It wasn’t that tiring carrying ice if we used our belly as a support.

Ilisapi: We weren’t doing it to be sly. Back then, we were a lot more shy than girls are today. I am not sure why. Maybe because we got tied down when we were a lot younger. I started living with my husband when I was only fifteen years old and I had my first child at sixteen. We would attempt to hide our bellies when we were pregnant, unlike girls who get pregnant today. Even young girls today are not shy about being pregnant. I was away having a baby and I noticed how girls today are not even embarrassed to show how big their tummies are. They even expose their tummies. Maybe it is easier when there are only women around, but life was so different in the past. Young girls today are not shy at all, to the point where they even rub their tummies in public.

Tirisi: If you are not used to seeing this, it is really noticeable.

Ilisapi: In the past when you were pregnant, you tended to rub your tummy only when no one was looking. Today, girls do not even care if there are people watching.
What did you do when the belly hardened?

Ilisapi: I was advised by my mother and grandmother that I should move the baby around in my tummy if it started to harden. I would do that when no one was watching because I was shy. My in-laws came to our camp to live with us and my mother-in-law told me not to move the baby around as it was very embarrassing. I asked her, “Isn’t it going to stick?” She told me that it would not get stuck. It was the womb that hardened not the baby. If I moved it around, I would be moving the baby’s intestines. I guess, even though the belly hardens, the baby does not get stuck. Ever since then, I have not bothered to move my babies around. We were advised not to be idle though, so the baby would be in a good position.

These days it may be dangerous for us because we just sit around all day in a classroom.

Ilisapi: Probably. This isn’t good for you.

Were pregnant women advised not to just sit around even before they were showing?

Ilisapi: Yes. It was impossible to just sit around anyway. We had to tend to our qulliq, we had to get ice, we always had something to do. We had to assist our husbands if they were going out hunting. There was never any time just to sit around. After they had departed, then we could rest and take it easy. There were times we used to travel by dog team, even when we were far into our pregnancy. In the spring, it was not hard to travel so we didn’t have to worry about a premature delivery.

Ilisapi to Tirisi: Would you also nunaqqaqtuq, go inland from the coast to caribou hunt, while you were pregnant?

Tirisi to Ilisapi: Yes. We must have had a lot of stamina.

Ilisapi to Tirisi: Have you ever delivered while you were inland?

Tirisi to Ilisapi: I never delivered while I was inland.

I have heard the word ataaqtuq being used. What does it mean?

Ilisapi: It means travelling back to the coast, after having been inland. This is called ataaqtuq.
It is a wonderful experience having a baby.

Tirisí: It is like you are refreshed all of a sudden.

After the delivery you feel like you have a tiny belly!

Ilisapi: One feels like a beautiful woman. It is as if everything is perfect.

Have you heard about a newborn surviving and the mother dying?

Ilisapi: That happened more than once in our community. The baby survived but the mother started bleeding heavily and she died.

Did that only happen to women who had rough deliveries?

Ilisapi: It seemed to be that way. When one woman’s baby was born it wasn’t breathing and she said to let the child be. Maybe she wanted to be the one to live. Once they helped the baby to start breathing, the mother stopped breathing instead.

Do you think the mother would have survived if they hadn’t done this?

Ilisapi: Probably she would have lived. Newborns were not considered as important as the mother. If they were both fine, then that was excellent.

Tipuula: I was told that if a baby’s umbilical cord came off without me noticing it, I was not to look for it. If it fell off while I was carrying the baby I wasn’t to look for it, for if I did, it would make the child hyperactive in the future.

Ilisapi: I would look for them. I would feel squeamish if I found them after they had dried up.

Tipuula: They would only be attached for three days. I guess touching our bare backs all the time, made them come off sooner. Feeling the warmth of our body made them come off more quickly.

Weren’t newborn babies wrapped in something before you put them on your backs?

Tipuula: The only thing they wore were shirts.

Ilisapi: They would also wear a hat.
Tipuula: Yes. We made sure they had a hat right away. That was all they wore.

*Was the hat made of caribou skin?*

Ilisapi: Yes. Either that or the hat would be made of cloth. Newborns always had hats made for them.

Tipuula: Some women would even make a hat before the baby was born, to protect their ears. We went to Naujaat shortly after my daughter was born. Two or three women came up to me and I noticed that the babies had no hats or clothing. Maybe they were getting them used to the cold right away. That was their way of life. Our customs differ from others depending on where we live.

Ilisapi: Some things were done differently. She mentioned that we were not to look for the dried umbilical cord.

Tipuula: We still carry on some of our customs.

**Preparing oil for the qulliq**

*What other ways was ringed seal oil used when it was boiled or pounded?*

Ilisapi: We would use it for the lamp. We would use it to oil sealskin boots, kamiik. It would be used to oil the qajaq as it is used in water. It would be applied over stitches. The word for oil is ingnauti. When we were trying to extract the oil from the blubber we would either boil it or pound it. We could also cut it into thin strips which we placed in the qulliq and let the oil seep out.

*If you were going to boil it, did you have to cut it up first?*

Ilisapi: Yes, we would cut it up into really small pieces before boiling it. It was time-consuming to cut it up. We also had small children to tend to as well as other chores we had to do.

*Were the small pieces you had cut edible once they were cooked?*

Ilisapi: If we wanted to eat them, we would squeeze out the oil first. We would only give small amounts to children because if they ate too much they would get sick. If it was over-cooked, it was not as tasty. Bowhead whale blubber is very tasty; the blubber tastes like meat.
How was beluga whale blubber and bearded seal blubber used?

Ilisapi: You can do the same thing with them; pound them, and cut them up. Bearded seal blubber makes very good iktitaq. When you made iktitaq out of bearded seal blubber you didn’t have to squeeze it out as much and it is a lot easier to eat.

Was the blubber pounded only in the winter?

Ilisapi: Yes, because it was easier to pound the blubber if it was frozen. If we tried pounding it when it was thawed, we would splatter oil all over. It does not splatter when it is frozen.

How did you do this in the spring?

Tirisi: We would do this after the sun had set.

Ilisapi: When it rained and the heather was too wet, we would scrape off the oil from the blubber, or we would place it in a sealskin and we would pound it. When it became ingnauti we would use it for the lamp. There were different ways to make oil for the lamp. If the blubber was partly frozen, we would pound it and cut it up. Although it might look as if it had been pounded properly, if the tangiq had not been pounded enough then the oil would not seep out. It worked best when the blubber was frozen. There was a certain way to pound it. If we pounded it the wrong way, there would be small pieces floating around in the lamp. We women worked with blubber every day even though we had children to tend to. We worked with oil every single day. Our hands were always oily. We were forever connected to our lamps. We would always tend to the lamp and the flame, and make sure it was properly lit so we would be able to put it to use when we needed it.

Which was the best, the oil that was pounded or the oil that was boiled?

Ilisapi: They were both good.

Did they seem the same?

Ilisapi: During the summer, we would put it in a qattaujaq, a barrel. They would fill wooden barrels with blubber. Later on they used 45-gallon drums. The blubber would be placed in there, and it would be covered with a lid. The oil which seeped out of the blubber as it lay in the barrels was ready for use in the fall. The tangiq would be afloat on the top. There would be a lot of oil in the barrel. When we used oil that had been prepared in this manner the smell was very strong.
Tirisi: It had a certain odor which we called the smell of uqsuuti, which was the name of this particular method of preparation.

Ilisapi: If it was the only oil available, we used it readily. If we did not save the blubber in this manner in the spring, and there were a lot of stormy windy days in the fall so people couldn’t go seal hunting, then we wouldn’t have any oil for our qulliq. Therefore, we didn’t worry about the way it smelled. They would also store blubber in sealskins that had been cut a certain way to gather the blubber. We could use oil even if it was rancid as long as it had not been sitting in the sun. If the blubber had been out in the sun, the oil from it tended to snuff out the flame.

Tirisi: The flame tended to go out.

Ilisapi: Sometimes the oil did not agree with the flame, if the blubber had been left out in the sun. If you tasted oil that had been sitting out in the sun it would sting your tongue. We either learned about these things through experience, or we would be advised by our elders about them. Blubber would be aged in the shade so that the oil would agree with the flame of the lamp. Just as you young people gain experience in daily life, that is how we gained our experience too. We learned through experience what was good and what was not.

Ilisapi to Tirisi: Is walrus blubber thinner than seal blubber?

Tirisi: Yes. When you use it as oil for the qulliq, you tend to use it up faster.

Ilisapi: The oil really agrees with the lamp.

Tirisi: Polar bear fat also burns very well.

Ilisapi: Whale oil, polar bear fat, caribou fat, and walrus oil burn very well, but they also burn very quickly. The flame tends to burn really high whereas seal oil tends to a have really low flame. It tends to burn longer, but it doesn’t create as much heat, which is good for the iglu, but it’s not the best.

Was seal oil often used at night-time?

Ilisapi: It can keep burning through the night. If the lamp is quite large and there is a sufficient amount of oil, it can last the whole night. I mentioned earlier that certain types of oil tend to agree with the flame of the lamp. When that happens, the oil does not last
very long. If the oil disagreed with the flame, while we were asleep, the lamp would go out. We would fill the lamp up when we went to bed. It would still be on when we woke up even though the flame would not be as high. After we tended it, the flame would be as it was before.

When you woke up would you brew tea on the qulliq?
Ilisapi: Yes, we would start brewing tea, and then get dressed.

Tirisi: We would also cook with the qulliq.

Did it take a long time to cook something on the qulliq?
Ilisapi: We never thought that it took a long time. We would start cooking while the men were out hunting. The food would be cooked by the time they returned.

Was caribou fat used for oil too?
Ilisapi: Yes, it was used for oil by those who did not live on the coast. We didn’t use it, but people who lived inland did. They had more caribou than we did.

Does it have an odor to it?
Tirisi: No. It doesn’t have much of an odor but the oil tends to burn faster. It does have an odor, but not like seal oil does.

Ilisapi: It seemed to have a better odor than seal oil.

Tirisi: Meat seemed to cook better when you used caribou fat.

How was the caribou fat prepared?
Tirisi: It was prepared the same way as other oil. Either you boiled it to make tallow, or you chewed it to break it up. If you chewed the fat, the oil tended to last longer.

Ilisapi: The only difference is that it tended to be harder. When I used caribou fat in a small lamp, the flame tended to go out. Being from the coast, I did not have experience in using caribou fat for oil.
How much caribou fat did you have to use? Did it have to be from both sides of the backbone?

Tirisi: The lamp would be small. You would fill it up with fat. As the flame melted the fat you would add more.

Ilisapi: When you are inland living in a tent you don’t need to use a large lamp. Even though the lamp was small you were still able to dry out clothing and cook meat. You weren’t able to make water for washing though. In Iglulik and Mittimatlik, it was never the custom to spend the winter inland. Only those in the Kivalliq area, the Paallirmiut, lived inland in the winter and depended on caribou fat for oil. Sometimes they would not have oil for their lamps. That is how it was over there. There was never a time where we did not have heat; our lamps always had oil.

Skin diseases

Did you use rabbit skins to help heal people?

Ilisapi: We would use the thin parts of the skin, such as from the armpit area. They would be used to create an opening in a boil.

Tirisi: The thin parts of the skin would be used.

Ilisapi: I mentioned earlier that people didn’t often get sick, but having boils was a lot more common than it is now. First, there would be a hardening under the skin and then eventually an opening would form. If it got infected it got really large. If the pus did not drain out, it became even more infected. It would have to be treated before it could heal.

Did people get boils all over the body?

Ilisapi: Most often they were on the buttocks or on the back.

I wonder why boils are not as common today?

Tirisi: It is only recently that boils have become uncommon.

Ilisapi: I don’t know why they are less common today.

Did people also use lemming skins for boils?

Ilisapi: Yes. They would be used in the same way as rabbit fur. They would be used to cover the boil to keep it from healing over, so that the pus could drain.
Was the furry side applied to the boil?
Ilisapi: The side without the fur would be wetted and applied to the boil. The furry side would be on top.

How long did this have to be left on the boil?
Ilisapi: We would want it to drain completely. We would check it regularly to ensure the pus was coming out.

Did both adults and children get boils?
Ilisapi: Children did not get boils. We would not have boils all the time. It was only once in a while that we would get them.

Tirisi: If an opening did not form on a boil it had to be cut open.

Ilisapi: Yes. Otherwise the boil would swell up and get bigger. The boil would be cut open with a sharp knife that was made especially for this purpose.

They didn’t use a regular knife?
Ilisapi: No. It was a knife made especially for this purpose. It could be made from a pocket knife. It would have a handle, and it would be filed down and made really sharp.

Would they cut open the boil to get the pus to start draining?
Ilisapi: The surface of the boil was not painful. The boil would be licked to see where it was best to cut it open. It tasted kind of sweet where the pus was located. Even though the boil was swollen all over, one could tell where to cut it open by licking it and finding the area that tasted sweet. Another way you could tell where to cut it open was by pressing on it. Some areas felt soft and other areas felt solid.

Would they try to cut it at the centre?
Ilisapi: Yes. Then it would start to drain heavily. Once the draining started, it did not take very long to heal afterwards.

Did you make sure you did not touch the pus that was coming out?
Ilisapi: People did not touch it as it was bloody and not something you would want to touch.
Did the area that was cut bleed?
Ilisapi: It would bleed a little after the pus drained. The boil would be repeatedly drained until it eventually started to heal.

Was a bandaid applied?
Ilisapi: Lemming skin or rabbit fur would be applied to keep the wound from healing over. If it healed over, it would have to be cut open again. They made sure it did not heal over before it had completely drained. The lemming skin would be wetted and then applied.

Was the skin wetted with plain water or with oil?
Ilisapi: You licked the lemming skin and wet it with your saliva. A lemming skin could become wet from a single lick. Then you applied it.

Were there any other uses for lemming skins?
Ilisapi: Yes. They were excellent playthings. They were used as pretend bedding for dolls.

When lemming skins were going to be used to treat boils, did you remove the fur?
Ilisapi: If the skin was furry the fur would be removed. If you used the thin part of the skin, you didn’t have to do anything to it.

Did you ever use ptarmigan skins?
Ilisapi: Those could be used as well, if there was no rabbit or lemming skin available. If you didn’t have any, you could get them from your neighbours.

We heard that the skin from the red part of the loon’s neck had many uses in Nunavik. Was this used around here?
Ilisapi: Not at all. Those people had different ways of doing things than we did. I heard that when they would catch a ptarmigan on a hill they would leave the tail feathers behind and they would say “Come again, Come again,” so they would be able to catch more ptarmigan. We did not do this, as our parents did not have that custom.
Were fox skins also used on boils?

Ilisapi: They could be used but fox skins were very valuable. We didn’t want to damage them because the H.B.C. would buy the skins. We used ones that still had their summer fur as trim. We did not waste the skins as they were a source of income. We could use them to buy even expensive items such as boats and firearms.

Because you could use lemming skins on boils and for other things, did you try and catch a lot of lemmings?

Ilisapi: Yes. Children, especially boys, were always hunting for lemmings and birds. Even girls went after lemmings as they used them for dolls’ blankets. We would clean the skins and when an adult needed some, they would say, “Give me some of your lemming skin.” Then they would cut a piece off and it would be used as a bandaid.

Did you also use snow bunting skins?

Ilisapi: I do not think we even thought about those. If my brother caught a snow bunting, we would play with the skin and the wings. We even used to play with fish skin.

Were the little white lemmings which were said to be star feces used?

Tirisi: They were used like other lemming skins.

Ilisapi: White lemmings do not come from the stars. These ones, which are called amiq&ait, don’t seem to stay in one place. We call the lemmings that turn white in the winter amiq&ait. The claws are not on top of each other either.

Tirisi: For sure, they are shaped like human nails.

Ilisapi: Yes. The longer claws seem to be on top of each other in the winter, but not in the summer. I guess when they burrowed through the snow, they wore them down.

Were the skins of the tiriat, ermines, used for boils as well?

Ilisapi: They could be used, but the skin is really thin. I have never known of anyone using them for that. We did not catch very many ermines as they were too fast for us.
They make you squirm!

Ilisapi: There is an abundance of ermines in the fall. They also don’t stay in the same place. Even adults enjoy going after them.

Have you ever heard that an ermine can kill a person by biting them on the neck?

Ilisapi: I have never heard that. I have heard that they run around and around their victim until their victim gets so dizzy they drop. Some people say they then go up the anus, even though we know that they do not do that. However, they can occasionally go into a dog’s mouth, and go down into its stomach and then come back out. Once out, they would run around again.

Ermines make me squirm!

Ilisapi: They make me squirm too. I have heard that they can enter muskox anuses. They are quite ferocious hunters too. They say that muskoxen form a circle with their behinds inside to prevent ermines from entering their anuses! This is not really true, but it seems like a good explanation. I told you about ermines going down into dogs’ stomachs. We had a dog that went to bite a young ermine but it ended up going in the dog’s mouth. We lost the dog as it ran far away.

Tirisi: It probably went such a distance it couldn’t find its way back.

Ilisapi: It probably kept vomiting and could not do anything for itself anymore.

I have heard that ermines bite humans on the neck. Maybe we were told that so we would stay away from them.

Ilisapi: We used to be told stories when we were little children. We would be told that we would be captured by a qallupilluk if we hung around the beach, yet we were never actually told that there were really qallupilluit. They used to scare us by telling us that if we were outside without our hoods up, the aqsarniit, the northern lights, would cut our heads off. We now know that this is not true. They did not mean to terrify us. They just told us those stories to help ensure we were doing what we were supposed to. Of the things that we were not supposed to do, it seems that the least important of them are still being carried on today.

Tirisi: Absolutely!
Ilisapi: In our area, women who were pregnant were advised not to chew gum so they would not give birth to a baby covered with *uquk*, vernix, the white substance covering a newborn. No two deliveries are exactly the same. Some newborns are covered with *uquk* which makes them more difficult to deliver than other babies that are more lubricated. Do not chew gum. That is one of the minor *pittaliniit* that has been carried on. Even though the minor *pittaliniit* are not that significant, the reasons for following them still apply.

Tirisi: They didn’t want the woman who was delivering to have difficulty because of lack of lubrication.

Ilisapi: We would be told not to make our *kamiik* laces too long or else the baby’s umbilical cord would be really long. I do not believe that. We should be saying, “Make sure your laces are not too long so you will not trip over them!”

**Diagnosing sickness in the body**

*How were you able to tell where a person was sick? For example, if someone was feeling pain around the liver, how did you know what was wrong?*

Ilisapi: We would guess that he had a bad liver if the person tended to feel full all the time. Even though he had not eaten, or just ate small bits, he would feel full very quickly and he would feel discomfort in that area. The area would also be swollen. Even though we had no way of testing back then, there were things that we knew that helped us to determine what was wrong. When a person tended to vomit a lot and when their stomach was sensitive, it was assumed there were problems in that area.

Would you know this because the person was vomiting?

Ilisapi: Not just vomiting, but also feeling uncomfortable around the stomach area. Whenever they ate hard food such as *maktaaq*, they were *sillinnnguujut* in a lot of pain. *Sillinnnguujut* is when what you have eaten feels like a hard knot in your stomach. The *quqqaq* is the place where the esophagus connects with the stomach. We would think that they were having a problem with their *quqqaq* even though we were not absolutely sure. We knew about human anatomy by comparing it with animal anatomy.

Tirisi: The person would not feel a blockage at the back of his throat. They would feel it deep inside at the *quqqaq*. 
Ilisapi: If someone coughed a lot and tired easily, we knew that they may be having problems with their lungs. If the pulse tended to fluctuate a lot and they felt discomfort and tired easily, then it was assumed that the person had a bad heart if these symptoms persisted. If the person did not feel comfortable lying on their back, and the pulse increased when they ate, you could tell they had a bad heart. If a person was having pain around the kidneys, and the urine was a very deep yellow and had a bad odor, it was assumed that the person was having problems with their kidneys. There was really nothing anybody could do. A person with this problem was not to hold their urine for too long. If someone was going baby seal hunting and they would be jumping up and down on the den on the ice, they would be advised to have an empty bladder or they might get a kidney infection.

If they had a problem with their bladder, was this called nakattuaq?

Ilisapi: Nakattuaq is when the bladder ruptures. Pregnant women are advised to urinate regularly and not to hold their urine. They are nakattijut if they urinate and some of the urine tends to stay in the bladder. Part of the bladder is pressed against the baby inside the womb so not all of the urine is eliminated. Some women tend to urinate frequently while in labour and this causes the labour to take longer than necessary. For that reason, one was advised not to hold the urine in for too long and to make sure to completely drain the bladder. Those who held their urine in while they were pregnant tended to have problems. Urine was one of the ways one could tell if there were problems.

Did a person have to stop eating if they had problems with their kidneys?

Ilisapi: I do not think they did that, but we were only children when there were no doctors. The adults spoke with each other, but I have not really heard about that.

Tirisi: We were always told never to eavesdrop, so we do not really know.

Ilisapi: My mother would know that if she were still alive. She would be able to give you more information. When the qallunaat came, we started to forget our way of life. I have to try and recall what they did because we were not allowed to ask questions. Sometimes we cannot answer your questions.

Tirisi: There are things that we think we have forgotten that we remember when you ask questions. When you are pregnant your belly becomes big. Your bladder is on the right side. Before you urinate you can press between your pelvic bone and your belly.
and feel your bladder. If you press there, you can completely drain your bladder. When the baby presses on it, we cannot completely drain it, but when we press on it prior to urinating, we can drain the bladder.

Were you advised to take care of yourself while you were pregnant, even though you constantly had things to do?

Ilisapi: Yes, definitely. We were advised to take rests periodically and we were advised not to worry about anything. If we had problems with other women, we were told that we should ignore them. We should not reply or get angry with them. We were told that we would make things worse by worrying about the person who was giving us a hard time. I think that was the major thing we had to be aware of as it could affect us physically. I was the type of person that talked a lot so I was often told not to do that. It was not that I was an angry person, but I had a quick tongue. I would talk a lot. I was often disliked for that reason. If I found out anything about anybody, I would gossip about them. I was advised against doing that. Even if we hear something bad about a person, we should not be too quick to judge them. We can only learn from our mistakes.

Today it is important to have a nice slim body. Were there overweight people back then?

Ilisapi: We discussed that earlier. There weren’t people who were so big that their arms were like their thighs. There were not people like that. Some were a bit fatter than others but there were not any people who were obese. Today we see some men with very big bellies. There were never any men like that before. Maybe because they were constantly hunting.

Tirisi: Maybe they weren’t fat because they used up a lot of energy keeping warm.

Ilisapi: Maybe it was because they were never idle that they were never fat. The ones who were a bit bigger than others were called *uvinikutujut*, plump.

Were those who were plump admired?

Ilisapi: You could tell by looking at them that they were healthy.

Did people have heart attacks back then?

Ilisapi to Tirisi: I don’t know. Do you recall anyone having a heart attack?

Tirisi: No, I don’t think so. Well, there were some, but it was not like it is today.
Ilisapi: I knew one person who had heart problems when I was a child. I remember he was able to speak English. His name was Takijualuk. He boarded with us while on his way down the coast. When I woke up during the night I saw his wife lying on her side. He was leaning against the wall of the qarmaq as he slept. It was said that he slept in that position because he had a heart problem. He was afraid to lie down flat. He reached old age even though he had a heart problem. He did not die of a heart attack; he died of an illness.

*Were people with heart problems advised against lying down?*

Ilisapi: People with heart problems were afraid to lie flat and also to eat too much. There was one woman with a heart condition who lost a lot of weight. Her mother-in-law advised her that she would be healthier if she ate more. She was also afraid of getting pregnant because of her heart condition. She did become pregnant and had a successful delivery. She did not end up dying. She probably started eating more. She lived to such an old age that she lost her sight. She did not die from a heart attack. I think that heart conditions are triggered by our mental state. Heart attacks in the past were triggered by a person’s mental state, such as being extremely angry. Some people refuse to believe people who claim to have a heart problem. When they get angry, they start complaining about their heart to get sympathy. Nobody believes the person. I think the same thing still applies. Some women claim to have a heart problem to get sympathy when they are angry. We should not lie if we are healthy. Do you believe that too?

Tirisi: Yes. It makes you want to counsel the person.

Ilisapi: Some people claim that they have a really bad headache, when they get angry. If they want to suffer through a headache, just let them suffer. Be straightforward with the person and ask them if they have a headache. You should tell them they are not sick and they have brought on the headache themselves through their anger. If the person starts talking and admits the problem, they get rid of the cause of their headache and don’t need to go to the Health Centre. Headaches can be triggered by the need to cry, or feeling anger towards our relatives. Talking out our problems is better than going to the Health Centre. That was the method that we used in the past. Once a person’s pain was released, they would get better. We can help people do things that they cannot do on their own. There are some people who can recover without going to the Health Centre. There are those who claim to have a bad headache when they are hung over. Maybe if they started talking about their problems, their hangover would go away.
It is quite different when you are hung over. You do not even want to be in a place with too much light. You have no desire to get up. I’d like to ask you about snow-blindness.

Ilisapi: People used to have problems with their eyes from snow-blindness. We do not see this today.

Tirisi: Some still get snow-blindness.

Ilisapi: Yes, we still see some people with it today, but back then, it was very common for young people and children to become snow-blind.

Tirisi: After you woke up, it was painful.

Ilisapi: When we would be travelling, we would get snow-blind to the point where we could not open our eyes. It was very painful especially when it was sunny. Eventually we would get better. We did not have sunglasses then, so tea leaves would be put in a little cloth bag and they would be used to cover our eyes. I do not know why they would use tea leaves to help cure snow-blindness, maybe because they are smooth. The eyes were in so much pain, tears would flow from seeing any light. Usually, it was really painful for one whole day, maybe from the salt from our tears. Some people had problems which lasted quite a while though.

I guess back then everyone was healthy as there was no junk food around for people to eat.

Ilisapi: We were always on the go. We did not just sit around and play Nintendo or Sega and drink tea. It seems as if everyone is idle today. We would never be idle. We always had to run alongside the qamutiik to keep up with the dogs. Young people would be competitive and try and keep up with their peers. There were some fast ones and some slow ones. I guess we were used to running and playing amaruujâq. People were much more active than they are today.

What was done for babies whose skin was jaundiced?

Ilisapi: I do not recall babies that had jaundice.

Tirisi: I found out about that not too long ago. It was spring time and I had placed a baby that was jaundiced in front of the window where it was bright. The skin went back to normal and she recovered.
The reason why I asked is because two of my children had jaundice. My son was placed under a light, and I had to place my daughter in the sunlight near a window.

Tirisi: I made sure that the baby I was caring for did not get a sunburn. I had her in the sunlight and she recovered.

My doctor told me that my husband and I have different blood so our babies tend to be jaundiced. The same thing happened to all my children.

Tirisi: Maybe it is just recently babies started being jaundiced.

Earlier you mentioned that pregnant women were not to worry about things.

Ilisapi: We were advised not to worry. There were no doctors or psychiatrists back then. If something was bothering you, you were advised to let go of the problem. If women were pregnant, they tried not to worry even though they had things on their minds. If we had a shortage of something, we were advised not to worry about it. There would come a time when the shortage would be replenished. We were advised not to be depressed. For example, if a woman had said something bad about us, we were told by our elders not to let it bother us. Even if it was something big, we were advised not to make an issue of it. It was as if they were trying to put a fire out before it spread.

People tried to keep each other from worrying. Some people had an abundance of nice clothes and some people did not. We tried to prevent there being too much disparity between people, such as the number of skins or the amount of sinew someone had. They did not give away everything they had, but they shared.

Were people always generous?

Ilisapi: There had to be a certain amount of stinginess as they had to keep some for themselves. They could give to those who didn’t have much if they wanted to, but they didn’t have to give to those who had a lot.

They tried to take care of what they had. It is not as if you could buy more from the store. If someone had absolutely nothing, it was not necessary to give them the best of what you had. You also didn’t necessarily have to split what you were giving away in equal amounts. There might be others who needed your help too. Anything could be shared. We would not worry about people not sharing. Today people are completely different. We do not even consider the fact that there might be people in need. It is as if
we just live for ourselves these days. There are people worried because they are short of something and we don’t even think about them. Maybe it is because we live in our own houses now. We do not check up on other people. Maybe it is because there are more people now.

Ear and eye ailments

*What was seal oil used for?*

**Tipuula:** Seal oil is still used today. Amongst all the animals, the seal is the most useful. Although the seal is really small compared to some animals, it is extremely useful. It is the most abundant. It is easier to catch than many other animals. Its blubber is used for food, and for heat. Seal oil is used to waterproof *kamiik* and of course for healing.

*Was it used to treat earaches?*

**Tipuula:** Yes. They would use the *taqquit*, the wick trimmer used to tend the lamp, to apply the drops. It was cleaned first, dipped in the lamp oil, and then used. They would apply three drops to each ear.

*Was it used just for eardrops or was it used for other things that required medical attention?*

**Tipuula:** They would also use it for someone who was so sick with a lung infection, that they could hardly move. They would rub the area around the pain with oil.

*Was this similar to the way we use Vapour Rub today?*

**Tipuula:** Yes. It was like Vapour Rub. Oil would be applied to the chest area if a person was really sick. It was rarely used though; it was used very infrequently.

*Was it only seal oil that was used for this purpose?*

**Tipuula:** As long as it was oil, it didn’t matter what animal it came from. It was also used to treat people with bad colds. I was given a couple of doses. It really helped even though it was hard to swallow. Although it is hard to swallow, if it is being used for medicinal purposes, you should take it anyway.

*Was the oil from a qairulik, a harp seal, used as well?*

**Tipuula:** Absolutely. It was used just like a *natsiq*, a ringed seal, when it was available.
Did you also apply it on cuts?

Tipuula: If one had a large cut, oil from an ugjuk, a bearded seal, had to be used. We would take a piece of blubber, remove the layer between the skin and the meat, and then scrape the oil out with a saliguut. The oil is called killik. You have to remove the excess oil and then place the blubber on the wound. It needed to be firmly attached. I have seen this myself. There was a time when there were skin rashes going around. My father recommended that I apply bearded seal oil on my ankles where I had the rash. The rash was so bad that when it was exposed steam seemed to be rising from it. My father told me to rub some bearded seal oil on my ankles before I went to sleep. Even though I was reluctant to do this because I was a teenager, I followed my father’s advice and applied oil on both of my ankles. The skin had peeled off and they were really red. When I woke up the next day, there were my ankles with new skin. They weren’t weeping anymore. They started healing overnight.

Was bearded seal oil the best oil to use for medicinal purposes?

Tipuula: We were told it was the best and we know this ourselves.

Earlier Ilisapi and Tirisi mentioned that Inuit in different locations had a skin rash at the same time. Did you have your rash as that time too?

Tipuula: It was at the same time. People who were living in different communities all had this rash.

How was the blubber from the bowhead whale used?

Tipuula: I have heard that the blubber of a bowhead whale can be as thick as a man’s calf. My father and his mother survived by eating bowhead whale blubber.

What does the word annaktuq mean?

Tipuula: It means surviving hardship, whether it be starvation or sickness. When my father’s father died he and his mother were left with absolutely nothing, not even an axe. He was quite young when that happened. A bowhead whale had been caught in the summer. After it froze they could no longer butcher it. They would place pieces of blubber on a peg over the qulliq after pounding it. The oil from the blubber would drop into the qulliq. A piece of blubber that was hung in this manner was called an itittiq. When all the oil had drained, the tangiq was eaten because it had been burnt to a crisp.
Was polar bear oil also used?

**Tipuula:** I was told by an elder not to use polar bear oil on kmiik that needed to be waterproofed. She said it was alright to use it in the fall and winter but not to use it in the spring and summer because polar bear oil draws in water. She said that all the pores in the skin get water in them and that was why I was not to use it on kmiit. I had heard that polar bear oil made excellent soap so I tried it, but it requires a lot of rinsing. If rinsed well, it is excellent. I washed my child’s shirt in it, since I did not like it being dirty.

Did the shirt get clean?

**Tipuula:** Yes. You scrubbed the oil like it was soap. It cleansed just like soap but the shirt turned yellowish from the polar bear oil.

Was it only children who had earaches?

**Tipuula:** Adults rarely had earaches. Children were the ones who had them most often.

**Ilisapi:** As we said earlier, it was rare for someone to be sick. People who were extremely ill seemed to recover more often back then.

Was bearded seal oil the only oil used to help people with an earache?

**Tipuula:** I heard that sand could be placed in a bag and then heated and used as a pad for an earache, although I’ve never done this myself.

**Ilisapi:** It could stay warm for an extended period of time. The sand that was used for this should not contain any clay.

Was it placed inside the ear?

**Tipuula:** The sand bag would be placed outside the ear.

Back then were people tusilattuq, hard of hearing?

**Ilisapi:** There is a difference between tusilattuq and tusaattianngittuq. Someone who was hard of hearing could have a slight or severe hearing problem. Some people lost their hearing as adults and some were like that from childhood. A person who is tusaattianngittuq doesn’t hear what has been said correctly. Sometimes they think someone has said something when this hasn’t been the case.

**Tipuula:** In the past some children were said to be tusilattuq.
Ilisapi: Those were children who were often scolded.

Tipuula: Scolding did not affect these children as they had become used to it. They had been scolded so often it didn’t mean anything anymore. Even if they were told to hurry, it was as if they did not hear anything.

I have heard the term tusilattuq used in court during the jury selection process. The judge said that if anyone had a hearing problem they should come forward. The interpreter used the word tusilattuq.

Ilisapi: She made a mistake.

Tipuula: There is a term that is used but I cannot remember it right now. Maybe it will come later.

Were there any deaf people back then?

Tipuula: There was only one completely deaf person in Iglulik. She was born deaf.

Was she able to speak?

Tipuula: She could not talk because she never heard people speaking. She was born deaf. She had never suffered an earache. That was the way her ears were formed in the womb, so she spent her life being deaf.

Did she use sign language?

Tipuula: Very much so. We used to be scared of her at first because we did not know how to sign. Once we got used to her, we found out that she was very friendly.

Ilisapi: Nobody in our community was deaf but we heard of the deaf person in Iglulik.

Tipuula: The woman I was speaking of was completely deaf. She was born like that. We know today that some people become deaf from ear infections, especially if they are not tended to properly. Even when they are tended to, sometimes it’s hard to get rid of an ear infection.

I wonder if elders have lost their hearing from driving snowmobiles? Maybe before there were snowmobiles, their hearing was less affected.

Tipuula: More elders have had hearing loss from that, than from hearing loss due to old age.
Ilisapi: There was a very old lady in our community, even older than we are, who had hearing loss.

Tipuula: We had an old man living with us who had been hard of hearing since he was a teenager. By the time he became an old man, he was almost completely deaf. He moved in with us when he became a widower. Once, before my husband went hunting, he told me to tell him to thaw out some meat so when he came back the food would be ready. He wanted him to take out some ungiraag, walrus meat that had been bound in its own skin. We were living in an iglu at that time. Although he was old he was still very active, and not suffering from any illness. Alurut was just a small boy, although he was able to talk. Here we were, this old man who was hard of hearing, and myself. I was not very talkative at all when I was young. I was at a loss as to how to ask him to take out the meat. The time was passing quickly so I wrote him a note and had Alurut give it to him.

Did people remove ear wax?
Tipuula: Yes, we cleaned our ears. We were advised not to poke deep inside for fear that the drum might get punctured.

What did you use to remove the wax with?
Tipuula: Anything that was available. We would use a needle or a splinter of wood. We could use anything as long as it did not have a sharp point. We could also use the top of a feather if we used it gently.

What happened if an eardrum ruptured?
Tipuula: The person could become hard of hearing. When you get a cold, the ear tends to drain. It was not very often that we caught a cold. I was told how to position a baby while breastfeeding so that the ears wouldn’t get infected. The baby’s ear shouldn’t rest against the mother’s breast or it might get infected. This advice has been passed on to us for generations. As soon as you finish breastfeeding and the child is going to sleep, make sure the ear is exposed to the air. Otherwise it might get infected.
Maybe my children get ear infections because I have always fed them lying down like that. What was done when the ear started to drain? Was oil used?

Tipuula: Only if they were in severe pain. Myself, I would apply it before the ear drained if the child’s ear ached. If a baby was constantly crying, there was no way we could tell what was wrong. I would assume that he had an earache, and would apply drops in the ears. The child would recover soon after.

My in-laws and my parents would advise me to lay down once in a while when I was pregnant because the baby got tired when I stood up too long. Some of us were really ordered around and told what to do. Some refused to listen. Myself, I would sometimes refuse to listen if they were minor things, but I followed what I was told to do if they were important.

Tirisi: It was scary to refuse.

Ilisapi: If we listened more, they asked us to do more chores. Some would completely refuse to do what they were asked to do. I did my share of chores because I was never lazy. Even today, I am still not lazy.

Tipuula: Before I was married my father would worry about my future. He would get me up in the middle of the night to do things for him. He was getting me to do chores so that he wouldn’t worry about me after I was married. If I listened to whatever my husband asked me to do, that would make him happy. Even though I did not feel like getting up, I would get up anyway. My father was watching to see how I would react to what he asked me to do. I would even have to do errands on cold winter nights. He would wake me up while I slept and I had no choice but to get up, even though I did not feel like going out in the cold.

Ilisapi: I scared easily. One time my father arrived early because the wind had come up so he woke me up to help him with the boat.

Tipuula: Even though they were capable of doing these things for themselves, they were helping us to prepare for our future.

Ilisapi: It did not seem right at the time. We were given tasks that were difficult so that we would be experienced by the time we got married, so that in times of hunger we
could survive. Maybe our ancestors endured even more hardships. Today, life seems so simple. It seems that everything is too available. People today are in a dangerous situation because everything is too easy.

_Today if you do not feel like going out in the cold, you don’t have to._
_Do you understand what I mean? Even men are reluctant to go out in the cold._

_Ilisapi:_ We cannot speak of men. They were treated differently than we were. Boys had an even harder time, for they had to be able to provide for their wives and children after they grew up. It seems as if they had to go out all the time, even before they had eaten. As soon as a boy woke up, he was asked to dress and go outside and check the weather, so that he would be trained to go outside, no matter what the weather was like.

**What was done if babies or children had eye infections?**

_Ilisapi:_ They did not get a discharge in their eyes as long as they did not have a cold. Sometimes they would get snow-blind while travelling. When they were out too much, they tended to get snow-blind. I have an older brother who had an eye infection when he was a baby. His iris is sort of a whitish colour as a result.

_Tipuula:_ The eye infection your brother had is different from having discharge in the eyes.

_Ilisapi:_ Colds were passed on by qallunaat in Mittimatalik once a year when the supply ship would arrive around September. By November, when the ice froze over, the men would come back with supplies. Sometimes they returned with a cold and sometimes they didn’t. Sometimes our father would catch a cold and then we all caught it and we all stayed in bed. It was a joyous time when they arrived with supplies. The next day, we might all have a cold but it was only once a year.

_Did you make a qimatuannnguat, a stash of items set aside for use at a later date, when the men arrived with provisions?_  
_Ilisapi:_ We don’t use that word. In our dialect the term is _ijiqtuat._ Our mothers would stash away supplies for when they would run low. They would put things aside whether it be tea or sugar. It was really exciting for us children when they would bring out the hidden stash; sometimes there would be candy.
Tipuula: If a child had a discharge in his eyes we would remove it with our fingers. Once I fell in the water with my daughter on my back on our way back from Naujaat. Both of her eyes were really bloodshot. We were passing through Sanirajak and her eyes were still really red. They sort of turned whitish. I was advised by an elder in Sanirajak to apply breast milk to her eyes when she was asleep. I was told to apply it every time she fell into a deep sleep.

Would you open the eyes to apply it?
Tipuula: Yes. I would open her eyes and apply the breast milk. Her eyes started getting better right away and she could see. She couldn’t see well though, as her eyes were very watery. Breast milk can also be used to help people who are snow-blind, both adults and children. Breast milk can really clear up snow-blindness. Breast milk could still be used for this.

Does your daughter wear glasses now?
Tipuula: Yes. She wears eyeglasses. We fell in the water in the spring. She had been born the previous fall. Her eyes turned redder and redder. The white part of her eyes was red all summer. Once I started applying breast milk, they got better.

You didn’t apply oil in this case?
Tipuula: I have never heard of oil being used in the eyes.

Ilisapi: If someone had a hard time falling asleep, it was recommended they apply oil to their eyes. The time that it was the hardest to fall asleep was when we were asked to go along on hunting trips. We would apply a bit of oil to our eyes to help us fall asleep. Our eyes would start getting blurry.

Tirisi: We used this to help us fall asleep.

Ilisapi: If a baby woke up as we were about to fall asleep, we would apply oil to the eyes. The baby would keep rubbing them and eventually fall asleep. We had to fall asleep at the same time as our father because we had to get up at the same time he did.

When they woke up in the morning were their eyes okay?
Ilisapi: Yes. Once the oil was applied, sleep was recommended. People did not stay up late or get up during the night. There weren’t people up when everybody else was sleeping.
Seizures

How were people who had seizures dealt with?

Ilisapi: We were advised not to lay them down flat but on their sides. We would make sure their head was not bent too far back.

Tipuula: We would make sure the body was straight. Their saliva has to drain. You needed to make sure they didn't swallow their saliva.

Ilisapi to Tipuula: Did you ever think that a person who was having a seizure was going to die?

Tipuula: Yes, I did. One of our relatives had seizures. I got used to this even though I was scared at first. We did not try to keep him from crying. The person having the seizure would be groaning. The first time a person had a seizure, the reason they should not swallow their saliva is that they might have repeat seizures for the rest of their life. Even if it is an adult they should be positioned so they will not swallow their saliva, especially if foam is forming. The person may just have the one seizure if they do not swallow their saliva.

Should you wipe off the saliva?

Tipuula: No. You shouldn't wipe it off. Just leave the saliva alone. If all of the saliva with the foam drained out, the chances were they would never have another seizure. It is quite dangerous to let someone swallow the saliva. If the person swallows the saliva, he'll tend to have seizures in the future. The saliva should be only cleaned off after the seizure has stopped.

Ilisapi: I do not think it matters whether it is wiped or not.

Tipuula: It is not the same as when a person has drowned.

Ilisapi: When you were in a frightening situation you weren't thinking about whether you wiped the saliva off or not. If you were the type of person who frightened easily this could be scary. I came across a person having a seizure when we were living in an isolated camp. The reason why I asked Tipuula earlier if she thought the person was going to die was because I found it quite scary seeing a person having a seizure when all their muscles had tightened up. You can even hear the legs snapping when positioning the body.
Tipuula: You shouldn’t try to immobilize the person and keep them from moving.

Ilisapi: You shouldn’t hold the body down when it is seizing. The muscles can tear if you try to hold the person down. If they are not in a dangerous situation, just wait for them to relax.

Should you leave the person alone?
Tipuula: As long as the person stays in one place, just let them be.
Ilisapi: Even if the muscles are tight, they will eventually relax.

What should you do about the tongue?
Tipuula: Make sure the person does not swallow his tongue or else his breathing will be affected. He could end up swallowing his own tongue and suffocate.

Ilisapi: Do people who have seizures on a daily basis stop breathing when they have them?
Tipuula: No. People don’t have them every day. They happen when there is a flood tide and during the full moon.
Ilisapi: There is nothing the doctors can do, although medication does help.
Tipuula: When the person stops convulsing, make sure they do not swallow their saliva. That’s the only thing that seems to work.
Ilisapi: The person I was talking about does not have seizures anymore. He only had a few of them and then they stopped. He told me that the day before he had a seizure he would see this black thing. He would try to follow it but he couldn’t. After he had the seizure the thing disappeared.
Tipuula: Their heads twist to one side or the other. If their heads twist to the left, then it is better.

If the person twists their head to the left it is better?
Tipuula: I think so. I do not think they were too happy if the head turned in the other direction. A common question that was asked when someone had a seizure was which way the head was turned.
Ilisapi: If a woman has pain in her left arm it is more dangerous than if she has pain in her right.

Tipuula: Men and women differ in this respect.

Ilisapi: It is more dangerous for a woman to have pain in the left arm. If a woman had pain in her right arm they thought she would recover. If a man had a pain in his right arm he tended to die from it. This is called **taliqtaujuq**. Even if it was just your hand that was swollen, you could die from that, if the poison travelled through the blood.

Tipuula: Having a pain in one’s arm was considered an illness. This is called **taliqtaujuq**. Those types of pains are connected to death.

*I have heard that if you have a red line travelling upwards on the arm, if you were to draw a line across it with a pen, this would stop it.*

Tipuula: You had to stop the red line from travelling upwards.

Ilisapi: You didn’t just make a line with a pen. You had to apply pressure with a needle or with your fingernail.

**What did you do with a child that had a cold? Even babies have chest infections these days. How was that dealt with?**

Tipuula: Babies rarely had colds, so I have no information on that.

Ilisapi: I mentioned earlier that people only caught colds once a year. My children were quite healthy, although other women had children that were often sick. I guess children who are well cared for tend to be healthier than others. That’s not to say that some unhealthy ones were not well cared for.

It is the same thing with dogs. One dog bears chubby puppies and another dog bears very sickly-looking ones. Some dogs have less of an appetite than others. They are all different. It is the same with us humans; some bear healthy children and others bear unhealthy ones. I am sure those with unhealthy children know what to do when their children are sick.

Tipuula: One time I revived a child that was dying. This lifeless child was brought into the community. The child was less than a year old. The child had been born in the fall and this happened during the winter. When I went to the place where the child had been taken, there were people fighting over the child. I had been asked to come, so I went...
there. I have taken some first aid courses. I know just a little, not very much. I tried mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, and the child did not start breathing. The limbs were just hanging, obviously lifeless. The relatives were crying as the baby seemed dead. I told the family that since the child was not able to feel anything anymore I would not be as cautious about hurting it. Then I attempted mouth-to-mouth again. I did mouth-to-mouth at intervals that a child would normally breathe at. After three tries the tummy started to move.

Perhaps this child had been crying so much that the lungs had dried up and collapsed. Because the child seemed lifeless I was just trying to experiment with him then. I could hear noises that seemed to come from the stomach area. Then the child started to move. He was not breathing yet but slowly he started to breathe. The child eventually started to cry.

It must have been a good feeling.

**Tipuula:** Yes. I have revived a baby more than once. I guess, if it is not their time to die, they live. I was present at the birth of a stillborn baby. It was just limp and had no pulse. I checked for a pulse and there was none. I was using what I had learned from first aid. The baby was cold and blue. Stillborn babies have a higher chance of dying than their mothers. I checked to see if the mother was feeling okay first, for if there had been any sign that something was wrong with her, I was going to let the baby go. I have heard that if the mother is in critical condition and the baby survives, the mother tends to pass away. It seems as if the mother and the baby fight for life. The baby was completely lifeless.

I held the baby’s feet and folded and unfolded the baby’s legs trying to match the intervals of a baby’s breathing. I was moving the stomach around but there was completely no pulse in the intestinal area. I repeated what I had been doing and when I checked the tummy again I felt a pulse. So I said, “Let’s say a prayer.” First I said the Lord’s Prayer then the ‘Glory Be’ and then I said all the prayers I could remember. After that, I again repeated what I had been doing and the tummy started to move. The same thing happened to this baby as to the baby I told you about earlier.

**Ilisapi:** Is this person still alive?

**Tipuula:** Yes. She is still alive. Her younger sister was stillborn too. Her hands were clenched in a fist when she was born. This is called *tigungarujku*itq. She had more strength as her fists were clenched. She had a pulse but her heart beat was irregular. I didn’t know if I could revive the baby but I knew I had to try. I wasn’t able to do this on my own; it was because I received help I was able to do so.
Did you revive the baby before the umbilical cord was cut?

Tipuula: I did it after it was cut so that I could handle the baby more easily. I wanted to be able to move it around so I cut the umbilical cord first. Because the mother was fine, I wanted to save the baby.

Did you only tend to the baby after checking to see if the mother was fine?

Tipuula: Yes. If there had been any indication that there was something wrong with the mother, I would not have tried to revive the baby as she was already dead. Even though you hate to see them die, if there is something wrong with the mother, you have to tend to the mother first. Since the mother was fine, I wanted to save the child. It took almost an hour to get the baby breathing. I often regret not keeping track of the time. I find that newborns can be quite resilient.

Tirisi: Just like puppies.

Tipuula: Yes, puppies do not die easily. Puppies were killed when there were too many of them, but they did not die easily. Even when they are knocked out, it takes quite a while for them to die. Puppies can have tremors for a long time. The same things applies to newborn babies. They don’t die easily.

It must have been a good feeling.

Tipuula: Newborns do not suffocate easily either. Even if they are face down when sleeping they do not suffocate easily. If a baby has gained weight and it is chubby though, it is at a critical stage. If it is face down even for a short period, it can die quickly. If it chokes it can also die quickly at this stage. We have heard this and have experienced it ourselves.

Allergies and infections

Were there cases of people having allergic reactions, such as to caribou meat?

Tipuula: It was mainly fish that people were allergic to.

Ilisapi: I used to get hives when I was a teenager for no apparent reason. I got bumps but they did not seem to be from what I ate. Sometimes people get them from eating
fish. When I ate seal liver and intestines that were boiled, I used to get a mouth rash. It was like I had bumps in my mouth. My parents never told me to stop eating liver or intestines. Whenever I had the opportunity to eat them, I would, even though I would get a rash in my mouth after.

**Tipuula:** Some people would get hives from eating fish that were too fresh.

*Do they call those nutilliarjuttut?*

**Tipuula:** Freshwater fish were called *nutilliarjuit*. Some people would have a reaction from eating them.

**Ilisapi:** Some people had a reaction to polar bear meat. Either their mouths swelled up or they got hives.

*That happened to my daughter.*

**Ilisapi:** Some people react to the point where their whole body becomes swollen, and where they itch down their throat and esophagus. They feel dizzy for a while, but this is temporary. I knew a person who had that kind of reaction. Myself, it seemed that my itching would go deep inside. After there were nurses, they asked me what I had eaten when this happened, but I was unable to figure out what I had had the reaction to.

*What was done for babies who had canker sores? Did they get these because they were allergic to breast milk?*

**Ilisapi:** My older sister often had canker sores. When we were asked to soften skins, she would say she couldn’t. When I would ask to see her mouth she would have sores which she would clean herself by wiping them with duffle or other material that wasn’t smooth. That way, she would get better.

*Rinsing out the mouth with salt also helps.*

**Ilisapi:** I think that is the best. Nowadays children are given medicine to kill the pain. I would recommend putting oil on the sores as well.

*Would you apply oil to canker sores?*

**Ilisapi:** Yes. You can really feel it when you have a sore throat. Using myself as an example, it was not very often that I got a sore throat but when I did, it was really bad. I even had a hard time swallowing water. Once, not too long ago, I was trying to drink some tea. It was very hard to swallow and I was rather hungry. I slept for a bit, and
when I woke up there was some fresh maktaaq, whale skin, on the floor. I was thinking how painful it would feel eating it since it was so hard. Even eating palauqaq was painful. I was even scared to eat that. Even though I was thinking how painful the maktaaq would be to eat, I decided to have some anyway. I chewed it for quite a while. There was some saliva in it when I swallowed it. Even though I was very hungry, I made sure I chewed it well. I do not know how much I ate. Eventually, my sore throat disappeared. Maybe it was because maktaaq is oily. I even drank tea without a problem after I ate the maktaaq. I felt much better.

*Perhaps oil is the best thing for a sore throat?*

Ilisapi: Maybe this is because you can’t feel what you are swallowing as much.

*Was beluga blubber useful for a sore throat as well?*

Tipuula: When my son had a throat infection, blubber made him better. He was too scared to eat meat so he asked for some blubber, even though he could hardly talk. After he ate it, he was able to swallow more easily, and he was able to eat meat shortly after.

*Could any kind of blubber be used?*

Ilisapi: It's worth trying anything if you have an infection in the mouth. A person who has an infection will try anything. Our children had thrush around their first birthday. Any child with thrush cannot eat well. There is nothing you can do.

Tipuula: When the sores are fresh, before they start bleeding there is nothing you can do.

Tirisi: If you remove them they can get worse.

Tipuula: They should not be removed while they are still being formed.

*Should you only remove them when they are no longer fresh?*

Ilisapi: Yes. When my daughter was suffering from this, I would take her outside and carry her on my back. She would be crying from hunger and yet she would not nurse from me. She was very quiet but when night came, she was bawling. I would get up and carry her around outside until she stopped crying and fell asleep. Then she would start crying again. She was like that for about three days. Back then, there was more concern about babies with thrush than babies that were actually sick. It was really exhausting. No wonder! Their mouths were swollen.
Tipuula: When a baby had thrush after the teeth had erupted, the mouth would seem to be so swollen the teeth would disappear.

Really?
Ilisapi: Once the child could be fed again, even if the mouth was still bleeding, we were very happy.

Tipuula: Sometimes women would have thrush on their breasts.

Ilisapi: Yes, the areola around the nipple turned red. This would happen after the small white sores appeared in the mouth. I wonder why some women would get this and some women wouldn’t. I heard about this occurring in my community.

I don’t know if they are itchy or not. They are white and they look like sores. I heard a person in Mittimatalik saying that her grandchild had very strong saliva. He was scratching his mouth and it seemed dry. I advised people to stop scratching their mouths. The saliva seemed strong and they had these itchy white sores in their mouths that were hard to get rid of. They healed eventually.

When the breasts became infected, was oil applied?
Tipuula: The breasts did not really have sores but they turned red. How quickly the infection would clear up depended on how quickly the baby’s infection went away.

Medicinal plants
What kind of plants did you use to take away a stomach-ache?
Ilisapi: If we had diarrhea, we were advised to eat airait. All plants have airait, but these are the roots of the yellow oxytrope. For example, the qunguliiit, mountain sorrel, has roots as well. The type that we are talking about though, were the ones that would made the diarrhea stop. They did not seem to help much.

Tipuula: They were a big help to some people.

What colour is this plant?
Tipuula: The tips of the plant are a greenish yellowish colour. Kigutangirlait, blueberries, and paurnqait, blackberries, were recommended for a person who had diarrhea. If you eat a lot of berries, the stool hardens.
Ilisapi: August is the best month to pick berries. When children ate too many berries, their stools tended to be harder.

Tipuula: When someone had watery stools, blackberries were more effective in hardening them than blueberries.

*If a person has a tendency to be constipated were blueberries better than blackberries?*

Tipuula: Yes, they were better than blackberries because blackberries can cause constipation. It is okay if you eat them with meat. If you just eat the berries alone, you’ll get constipated and have a hard time going to the bathroom.

*What did you do if a person was having pain in their kidneys?*

Ilisapi: If one is feeling pain in the lower back, the muscles tighten and so we know where the pain is from. The urine turns really dark. We could tell there was a problem with the kidneys, even before there were doctors.

*Were the tea-like leaves from the kakillarnait, the prickly saxifrage, put on cuts?*

Ilisapi: I have heard that people made tea from the prickly saxifrage and that the leaves were put on cuts. I do not know if we used those in our area. We used the leaves of paunnait, dwarf fire weed, for tea. We also used the leaves of the blueberry bush, kigutangirnaquti. I don’t remember what else.

*Were suputiit, the flowers of a willow gone to seed, used on boils and on umbilical cords?*

Tipuula: I do not know if they were used on boils.

Tirisi: The flowers from a willow that had gone to seed were used on umbilical cords.

*Were they also used on boils?*

Tipuula: They could be used to wipe the abcess of a boil, though I have never seen this being done personally. Lemming and rabbit skins were used as dressings for boils that weren’t healing properly. The lemming skin is said to draw out the eye of a boil.
Was \textit{ijjuq}, soil, used on burns?

\textbf{Ilisapi:} \textit{Maniq}, lamp moss, the one that looks like soil, was used for \textit{saqqarluktut}, indigestion.

\textbf{Tipuula:} The catkin of the willow before it goes to seed was said to be good for indigestion.

Was lamp moss commonly used for healing purposes?

\textbf{Tipuula:} I know that if one just had a baby and was lacking breast milk, lamp moss would be used to start the flow of milk by smoldering it under the breast. The lamp moss would be lit from the lamp. Lamp moss was also used as a wick for the \textit{qulliq}.

\textbf{Ilisapi:} When it is on the ground it is brown in colour.

\textbf{Tipuula:} It has greenish tips.

\textbf{Ilisapi:} The tops become fuzzy before they wither.

\textbf{Tipuula:} Although it grows in strands, it looks solid.

\textbf{Ilisapi:} Lamp moss seems as though it has \textit{ipa}, warp threads, whereas soil doesn’t. Lamp moss can be quite tall or it can be really short. We had many uses for it. We would soak it in oil. If it was saturated with oil, it would stay lit for a long time.

\textbf{Tipuula:} \textit{Urjuk} is like lamp moss. It is light in colour. It seems as though it has warp threads like lamp moss.

\textbf{Tirisi:} Lamp moss is harder than \textit{urjuk}.

\textbf{Ilisapi:} \textit{Urjuk} tend to grow in rocky areas, against rocks.

\textbf{Tipuula:} It is called \textit{niaquttaq} when it grows in clumps because it looks like a head. It has green tips. It is a type of \textit{maniq}.

\textbf{Ilisapi:} There are plants that grow around it. It can also be found in swampy areas. \textit{Tingaujiait}, caribou moss, can be found nearby.

Is the \textit{niaquttaq} the same colour as the land around it?

\textbf{Tipuula:} It is smooth but it grows in clumps.
Ilisapi: It looks like ijjuq and yet it is not.

Was mountain sorrel used as a healing plant as well?

Ilisapi: By the time the qallunaat figured out that plants were an excellent healthy food source, we had been eating them for a long time. We used to eat leaves and roots. When we were young we would fill ourselves up on mountain sorrel.

Tipuula: When we were going to go out walking we would cut blubber into tiny pieces and take it along. We would eat it later with uqaujait, young willow leaves, and aupilattunnguat, purple saxifrage.

Tirisi: They sure are tasty.

Ilisapi: I guess the plants we ate helped keep us healthy. I guess for that reason we hardly ever got sick. Everything that we ate was fresh.

Tipuula: When they are boiled, mountain sorrel are excellent for broth.

Tirisi: They are very sour.

What were pujualuit, puffball mushrooms, used for?

Tipuula: They were used on large cuts. The powder inside the puffball helped to cut down the bleeding. Rabbit droppings were used for the same purpose. We would be told to collect rabbit droppings. Then they would be beaded together and kept for future use.

Ilisapi: Rabbit droppings could also be used to start a fire.

Tipuula: We used to make bandaids from the skin under the forelegs of a rabbit as that area didn’t have much fur.

Ilisapi to Tipuula: What was done if the cut was too big to sew a bandaid over it?

Tipuula to Ilisapi: There were some people who could stitch up a person if the cut was too large. When a cut is very fresh, a person cannot really feel anything. Once the feeling returned, they would be in a lot of pain.
What did they use for thread?

**Tipuula:** Sinew. Sometimes hair was used. It was said that hair was even better to use on a major cut. I have seen hair being used for thread.

**What type of a needle was used?**

**Tipuula:** It is better to use a glover as it has a triangular point. Plain needles are not as good to stitch a cut with. Our skin seems very tough when we are trying to puncture it with a needle but if we cut it accidentally it is quite soft.

**Tirisi:** The skin on the head is even tougher than skin elsewhere.

**Tipuula:** The palms of the hands and soles of the feet have very tough skin too. Some people used to be very capable at stitching up a wound.

**When you were children were you taught by your parents which plants were edible and which were not?**

**Tipuula:** I have only heard kakillarnait, the prickly saxifrage, were not good if eaten raw.

**Ilisapi:** I enjoyed chewing them because of their prickliness.

**Tipuula:** We were advised not to swallow them unless we had chewed them well first. Those are the only ones that were considered dangerous. We were told to eat plants when they were ripe.

**Ilisapi:** If we ate too many plants, we tended to get constipated.

**Tipuula:** After eating plants, boiled meat tasted even better. Your appetite gets better after eating plants such as uqaujait, young willow leaves.

*And the delicious quarait, net veined willow. Are the prickly saxifrage different from kimminnait, cranberries?*

**Tipuula:** Yes. They are not the same.

**Ilisapi:** They are not the same as aupillattunnguat, purple saxifrage either. They are not sweet.
Do you have aqpiit, cloudberrries, where you live?

Tirisi: Not in our area.

Tipuula: We don’t even have any paurngait, blackberries, in our area.

Is that because it is too cold?

Ilisapi: We have blackberries and blueberries.

Tipuula: There are qungulit, mountain sorrel. There are also kukiujait, capitate lousewort.

I will send you berries.

Tipuula: That would be really good. There is only one area where kallat, bearberries, grow. There are no other berries.

The plants you are talking about are never available in the winter. What did you do when you had diarrhea in the winter time?

Ilisapi: We didn’t get diarrhea very often. It was only if we ate too much, that we would have diarrhea. We would just wait for it to pass. It was not a major problem. If a person had very watery feces for a long while and lost weight, then seal flippers would be boiled and fed to them.

Tipuula: When they boiled the flippers they didn’t remove the fur. The flippers were cooked until they softened. The fur was also eaten.

Ilisapi: That’s how they treated diarrhea, if the person had had it for a long time.

What do caribou eat?

Ilisapi: Nirnait, caribou lichen.

Tipuula: They eat caribou lichen the most. They are whitish plants.

Ilisapi: They eat caribou lichen, quajautit, rock tripe, and the visible parts of plants. Sometimes they even eat down to the roots.

What are the yellowish plants that seem to move called?

Ilisapi: I think these plants are called caribou lichen.
When the plants are covered in the winter, what do the caribou eat?

Ilisapi: They eat the same plants. They still eat them, even if they are dead. They can smell them and they know what plants can help them gain weight. They move on after living in a certain area, when they are running low on food.

Were you ever told that a qalupalik is scared of rock tripe?

Tipuula: I haven’t heard that.

I have heard if there is a qalupalik, you should go where there were rock tripe because the qalupalik won’t go there. Did you eat the same plants the caribou ate?

Tipuula: We would not eat them to get full. We just nibbled on them.

Ilisapi: We would eat a little mountain sorrel, then a few willow leaves and then a few roots. We would pull out the sweet parts which are called tuttut. We would munch on those. Mountain sorrel, willow leaves, aupilattunnguat, purple saxifrage and the roots of the yellow oxytrope were the plants that we ate. We did not eat paunnait, dwarf fireweed, but we used it for tea.

Tipuula: People from Kinngait eat a lot of kuunniit, kelp.

Ilisapi: We started doing the same thing. We started eating kelp as well.

Tipuula: They made aluk with it also.

Ilisapi: To make the aluk, we added seal blood. We used to gather the leaves of the dwarf fireweed. We would mash the leaves and remove the juice. Then we would put the leaves in a bowl and add some seal blood. After oil is added it becomes really tasty. I learned this recipe from someone from Kinngait.

If you chew one plant and it touches your tongue your tongue becomes numb. When you chew it and you have a toothache it goes numb. Some of the plants we ate were sweeter than others. We did not eat leaves from the avaalajiat, dwarf birch, very often as they were not very sweet. We only ate them once in a while.

Don’t qimminnait, cranberries grow in your area?

Ilisipi: No, they don’t.
What was the name of the plant that numbs the tongue?

Ilisapi: It does not have a name. When we were children we called it *qasilinnait*, because it burned when we tasted it. The leaves have bumps on them.

Tirisi: Maybe you are talking about *atungaujat*, but I’m not sure.

Ilisapi: We do not seem to know what to call them. *Atungaujat*, or *alaksaujat*.

Tipuula: We used to eat *kukiujait*, capitate lousewort. When you pull out the insides, they taste like sugar. We used to just eat the tips of the flowers.

*Do they look a bit like bananas?*

Ilisapi: Yes, they are quite long. They can grow quite long if they grow in an area where they don’t freeze too early.

*What about the flowers on the qijuktaat, Arctic bell heather?*

Tirisi: They taste awful.

*Did people ever eat them?*

Tipuula: We used to try and nibble on them when we were children, but they tasted awful.

*What are these plants called?*

Ilisapi: I don’t know. The only plants that we have are blueberries and crowberries. We don’t have many other plants in our area.

*Were there any plants that were used for medicinal purposes that we have not asked about?*

Ilisapi: All I know is that *pujualuksait*, unripe puffball mushrooms were used as band aids.

Tipuula: Last summer we got together for a conference. I learned that the algae at the edge of the river was used for boils. I found that out last summer. You can remove the slime from the *aqajaq*, seaweed, and apply it. If a boil doesn’t have an opening yet, it draws out the pus.
Did they use this to try and remove the infection?

Tipuula: I heard about this from some people from Iqaluit.

I heard from my father that it was also used as bandaids.

Ilisapi: It can also be used as wicks. It is quite thick but it can be pulled apart and it is not sandy.

Tipuula: It does not have roots.

Ilisapi: It smouldered very well. The plant that I said had a numbing effect, has a leaf like the Canadian flag.

Sickness before and after the arrival of the whalers

I will be asking what types of sicknesses there were before the whalers arrived, and what kind of sicknesses there were after. What kind of sicknesses did they bring?

Tipuula: I have never heard of any.

Ilisapi: I do not think there were any sicknesses before the whalers arrived. We were very healthy people. It seems as if the only thing the qallunaat brought were colds. I do not think that the colds back then were the same as the colds we have today. We used to cough up marniq, very thick yellow sputum. Today, when we have a cold we have this bubbly sputum. People used to catch colds and then they would recover. I never had colds myself. Even today, I still do not get colds. I do not think the qallunaat brought any sicknesses except for colds.

What about measles?

Ilisapi: I have never heard of people back then having measles.

In the past, were there measles too?

Tipuula: Measles is a recent sickness.

Ilisapi: That type of sickness wasn’t around back then. The only thing we had was the rash I told you about. People suspected that the rash was caused by a bomb going off while the war was going on.
Tipuula: I have heard of children having fevers and being really sick back then. We assumed that there was a problem with their intestines. They felt pain inside and they had very high fevers. If little red spots erupted on the skin, the child was expected to recover and it was no longer dangerous. That’s what they considered as a sickness travelling outwards. When this happened, the person was on their way to recovery.

You said the skin would have little red spots. Do you mean that they had measles?
Tipuula: They were not measles, just little red spots. When this happened they used to say the sickness has broken in children who had fevers. The spots were visible on the skin. When they were feverish and the sickness had not erupted in a rash on the skin, the sickness was considered more dangerous. It was said that it was destroying the body internally. Fever can be dangerous too but it was more of a concern if the sickness had not erupted on the outside of the body.

What do you mean by uutiq?
Tipuula: It is a very high fever.

Ilisapi: A person would be very hot to the touch. If children have high fevers, they do get better, but at the time they are cranky and pale.

Tipuula: It was also a big concern if they were really pale.

Is it better if they are feverish than if they are really pale?
Tipuula: Yes.

Ilisapi: If they are feverish you know it is just a flu going around.

Tipuula: It was considered more dangerous if you could tell the child was not himself, but you could not tell where the sickness was coming from. If there was no fever and no other visible symptoms, then you knew something was wrong.

Was the child cranky?
Tipuula: Yes. If the child remained really pale, that was considered dangerous. If they did not have an appetite this was also a concern.
Ilisapi: Even if someone was quite ill and had a fever, it was not alarming because they knew that this fever would pass.

Tipuula: If a child got really hot we would be told to take the child out for a while. They certainly were not kept inside back then. We would remove all their clothes before putting them on our backs. We would not expose them to the cold but we would take them out to cool off. We would have them covered while cooling them off and we watched them at the same time. When we got back in, the fever was down.

Did the whalers bring sicknesses other than colds?
Tipuula: I was not aware of the whalers. It was a generation or two before I was born when the whalers arrived.

Ilisapi: I do not think they brought anything other than colds. I have never heard of other sicknesses that they brought here. It was not like sickness occurred all of a sudden. Rashes have always been around, even before the incident I told you about. There was a song about rashes.

kumilakut, kumilakut, ungilakut ungilakut
Scratching, scratching, itchy, itchy.

Around that time, the ship did not come to our community for three years. Everybody had a rash everywhere. There was another rash outbreak long before I was born when my mother was just a child. That’s when that song was created.

Tipuula to Ilisapi: It was not the whalers that brought rashes?

Ilisapi to Tipuula: They were not caused by the whalers. Although the whalers did not bring diseases, they really changed our way of life. It is as if the whalers split people up. People used to have just one of each of what they owned. Nowadays, some people own more things than others and vice versa. We are aware of the changes to our way of life that have occurred since the whalers arrived. A missionary was already on board when the whalers first arrived. The changes that took place both physically and emotionally were too sudden. We were advised to change our way of life and our way of thinking because there was God, and there was Jesus. We had to grow. We were changed. We had to change our way of life.
Tipuula: Yes, even the things we used everyday changed. Written language arrived. Before then our knowledge was passed down orally. Young people today should be taught by elders, as we are doing with you now.

Ilisapi: I don’t think we are writing enough of the knowledge we have down. The whalers first arrived around the Pangniqtuuq area and then later went to the Mittimatilik area. It was in the early 1900’s when they arrived in our community. My grandmother was a young woman then, and my mother was not yet born. We were born after the arrival of the whalers.

**Different categories of illness**

*Can you tell us the difference between aanniaq and qanima?*

Ilisapi: In our community when a person is sick we say they are aanniaqtuq. Qanimaqajuq was used for someone who was just sick in passing. In our dialect we don’t use the word qanimarujuk, we use the word surangajuq, for someone who is a bit sick.

Tipuula: It is the same for us.

Ilisapi: Qanimajuq is not a word that was used in our area. My mother recalled when the term qanimajuq started being used. Maybe it came from the Pangniqtuuq area. This term used to refer to someone who was sick and close to death. Before this term was introduced we used to say aanniaqtualuk for this.

*Were you able to tell if someone was terminally ill or if they just had a passing sickness?*

Tipuula: Yes. You could tell the difference. The person was qanimaqajattuq if he was not near death, and he would recover. A person who was aanniaqtuq was deathly ill but would recover. If the person was sick but could get around on their own and work they were qanimatuinnaqtuq. A person was aanniaqtnaluk if they were bed-ridden and were unable to do anything.

*Was there a chance they would recover?*

Tipuula: Yes.
If a person was surangajuq, they were not critically ill?

Ilisapi: It is just as she said. It is the same as qanimajattuq. We all had our own dialects before we started interacting regularly with people from the Pangniqtuuq and the Kivalliq areas. We rarely saw people from the Inujjuaq area in Nunavik.

Tirisi: This was before there was modern communication.

Ilisapi: We used to make fun of each others’ dialects if they were different from ours. If their dialect was different from ours, then we thought it was funny, especially us people from the Mittimatalik area.

Footnotes

1 Generally known as bannock, a flat bread.

2 It was said that lemmings knew the reasons for sickness and death. Rasmussen (1929: 113) mentions that they were often used by angakkuit.

3 Atungaujat in Iglulik are leaves of mountain avens. In some communities in South Baffin this term is used for gilled mushrooms; in some communities in both North and South Baffin it refers to leaves that seem to sprout individually right from the ground, that are reddish in colour and shaped like willow leaves. These leaves are known as alatsaujat in other communities.
Physical Disorders and Mental States: Cultural Representations and Answers

Physical and mental resilience

Ilisapi: Tirisi and Tipuula are about the same age. I am the youngest one here. We can see how they take care of themselves. Even though a lot of Tirisi’s relatives have died, including her children, she’s still up and about. She is a happy person. Isn’t she a good role model for us?

Yes.

Tipuula: One of my children told me that I am a role model. I myself think I am a role model in one area but not in others. I told my children, when there were no strangers around, that there was one thing that I would like them to follow. I told myself when I got married that I would be faithful to my husband, and committed to one man. I know for a fact that cheating creates anger. Young people argue about this. I tried to ensure that was not a part of my life. There are a lot of bad things that go through my mind, but one thing that I vowed never to do was cheat.

How did parents make their children strong physically?

Ilisapi: Newborns back then seemed to be weaker than newborns today. The heads were very weak. We would hold their heads up until the time they started smiling. It seemed that they had less strength back then compared to babies that are born today. I think this is based on diet. That is where the difference lies. We all have noticed how much stronger babies are today. We bore children that were much weaker. Even if they were chubby, they were weak.

Tipuula: We would try to guess why the newborn was weak.

Ilisapi: If the hands tended to be open and the baby was weak, it was said he was not holding on to his life. Some babies’ hands would be clenched.

If babies sleep with their hands clenched, is this a good sign?

Ilisapi, Tipuula, Tirisi: Yes.
Ilisapi: That was really noticeable when they were newborns.

Really?
Ilisapi: Only when they were newborns.

Tipuula: Even babies born with their hands open could have a long life, though some did not survive.

Were you able to tell if someone would become a good person, just by looking at them?

Tipuula: Our ancestors before us were able to tell what type of person a child would become, based on how the child looked and acted. You could tell if he was going to be hard or easy to handle, right from birth. Children’s personalities were different, even if they had the same father and the same mother. Our parents could tell what type of person the child would become, when he or she grew up. My younger sister Sipuura and I were told that Sipuura would keep a tidy home and my home would be less tidy, for she was quick to move and I was not. This was before my sister had problems with her legs. I moved much more slowly. Based on that, they predicted our future. They said I would not take care of my things as well as she would. My mother was less talkative than my father. He could predict what we would be like when we grew up. He could tell if a boy was going to be a good hunter, based on the way he moved. Boys who took a long time to get up in the mornings would not be very successful hunters. The animals start their day early in the morning. Once it was dawn, the animals would not wait around for a person who tended to get up late. I myself could never predict what my children would be like when they grew up.

Would they know what children would be like from birth?
Tipuula: Sometimes.

Ilisapi: Those who had big bones would become big sturdy people. Even from birth, they could tell from the bones if the person was going to be skinny or chubby.

Tipuula: Some babies gained weight even though they did not eat much. You could tell from their flesh what they would look like. Although they would not be skinny, they would not be overweight and they would be fit.

Ilisapi: I could tell what the child’s physical appearance would be like, but there were others who were able to tell what traits the child would have.
Tipuula: When a child was old enough to start talking, the parents would be advised, if it was a girl, not to raise her to talk back to those older than she was. Some children are very talkative and some are not. Older siblings were advised not to provoke their sisters, as one day they would be married. They tried not to raise a girl to fight back, so she would not challenge her husband when she grew up. Women put themselves in a bad situation if they talked back to their husbands. If you had younger sisters you were advised not to make them angry, as they were already preparing them for the future.

You mentioned you could tell if a child was going to be lean or overweight by their flesh. How could you do that?

Tipuula: If the flesh was not very flabby when they were babies, you could tell that they were not going to be fat. When a baby’s flesh was very flabby, you knew that the baby would gain weight.

Before there were any doctors, how were they able to tell where a person was sick? Did they use animal anatomy as a guide to human anatomy?

Tipuula: Men are the ones who butcher the animals. If a person was feeling pain in a certain area, you could tell where the pain was by comparing it to animal anatomy. It has been said that a rabbit’s anatomy is the most human-like.

Can the human body be considered as two quppariik, separate vertical halves?

Ilisapi: We know that there are differences. One side is stronger than the other. If a woman had an illness on the right side, she might die if she had a pain in the arm. There seem to be two sides. One side is slightly bigger than the other. If a person has one side that is noticeably smaller, this is considered their bad side. The person is fine but their body tends to be uwingajaatug, slanted more to one side. The sides are not equal. One side has the heart while the other doesn’t.

Taamusi Qumaq from Puurmituq said that the hands, the mind, and the heart are the most important parts of the body. What do you think about this?

Tipuula: Our mind, our heart and our hands are the most important parts. We have to keep active all the time, especially our minds. Before I go to sleep, I think about the things I will do when I wake up.

Ilisapi: I think the right side of the body is very important.
Tipuula: If we had an infected siqpaluaq, ingrown nail, we were told that it was more dangerous if it was on the side facing you rather than on the other side. This applied to both our fingers and toes.

If it was infected they could tell how serious it was by determining if it was facing away from the person or towards the person. They used to sew a really tight bandaid to cover the finger until the nail started healing. It would start healing while it was covered. If it wasn’t covered up well, it would qissuqtuq, the flesh would stick out of the wound.

Ilisapi: The flesh would be really inflamed.

**What does qissuq mean?**

Tipuula: It is when the flesh is protruding from a wound.

Ilisapi: When that happened to me as a child, it was hard for me to keep the bandaid on, so my mother would dip my finger in very hot water. It was healed by the hot water.

**Ouch! Was the water salted?**

Ilisapi: It was just plain hot water. That’s what made it heal. I guess the hot water made it shrivel and dry up.

**What was done when a person froze a body part and gangrene set in?**

Tipuula: If the foot was going to be amputated, the tendons would be cut, and it would be removed at the joint. If the gangrene travelled further, the dead flesh would be removed. The tendons would be cut and the bone would be sawed off.

Tipuula: I would like to add something regarding quppariik. I have a child named Alurut. I adopted him at birth. When he was born, I could see that one half of his body was different from the other half. I could see the difference compared to my other children. When he fell asleep and was dreaming, one half of his body would be twitching and the other side would be jerking. When he slept, the twitching in his hands, legs, and feet used to be different in one side than the other. Inuit believe that this might be due to a problem in the head or the heart. That is how Alurut was. It seemed as if his body was quppariik. He is still like this today. He is left-handed and yet he can be ambidextrous. He can write with both hands. During the full moon he tends to be left-handed.
Ilisapi: Back then, we were more aware of children growing into adulthood. Children’s personalities are different, even siblings that come from the same parents. My children are very different from each another. I do not even have to ask some of them to do chores, because they are aware of things that need to be done. Some of them do not seem to have a care in the world, and seem oblivious to what needs to be done. You can really tell the difference between children, even when they are raised by the same people. Even though they are raised the same way, they differ from each other. Our ancestors really paid attention to the differences between children, as they had nobody to rely on but themselves. Our ancestors even paid attention to what children ate. They would know if a child was going to live off other people’s catches and have to rely on others.

Tipuula: The ones who were slower to move didn’t seem to be aware of anything beyond their immediate surroundings.

Ilisapi: You could see this, even when they were children. There are some children who pay attention to the weather.

Tirisi: Those who didn’t pay attention to the weather could not even tell which direction the wind was coming from.

Ilisapi: Adults tend to ask, “How is the weather?” Some children say, “I don’t know.” Others will say, “It is windy.” There are some children who pay attention to the weather and some who do not. These days when children go to school and you ask, “How is the weather?” they just look out the window and they say, “It is excellent,” whether it is good or bad as long as it is bright outside. Some tend to be like that. I think it is our responsibility to make them aware of the weather, not just the school. They do not forget what their mothers teach them.

Is this even more important if you have a son?

Ilisapi: Both boys and girls have to be aware of the weather, as we live in a harsh environment.

Tipuula: We carried our children on our backs. They would be searching all over and even before we would see anything they would say, “There is a seal.” Children see better than we adults do.

Tirisi: They could see little birds too. Children see better than adults. Some boys were more aware than others and saw things more quickly. Based on that, you could tell what they would be like as adults.
Ilisapi: We did not actively teach our children. We did not always pay attention to what they were doing. They started to notice things by themselves. When they saw people for the first time, they would note the resemblances to other people they knew. If you paid attention you became aware of the things they knew.

Tipuula: A mother could ruin a child by trying to make the child do things that he was still too young for. It is better for a child to learn some things when he’s older. Some children who grow quickly are said to be more advanced physically than mentally but this eventually evens out. A child can be ruined if the parents have unrealistic expectations.

Ilisapi: Trying to teach children too much at the same time can confuse them, not about routine things in the home, but about things that are beyond them.

Tipuula: If we try and shape our children’s future when they are too young, we can end up ruining them. We should not rush them into things. They are eventually going to learn anyway, when they are ready. We also need to pay attention to those who are old enough to know certain things and yet do not. When they are young, we should not treat them as being older than they are. Some children are more mature than other children at the same age. Forcing a child to grow up too quickly is considered a bad thing.

Ilisapi: I have noticed that once a child turns five years old, they are expected to grow up and leave their childhood behind. They do not learn about their mother’s activities as they are only home on week-ends. Even when they are home, they tend to play outside. If I was a qallunaq, I would recommend that children should not attend school before the age of five.

Tipuula: We are very different from the qallunaat, even though we are similar in some ways. We have been taught not to correct children, even if they pronounce something the wrong way. Even if the child reverses their syllabics, we should not correct them, as they will eventually figure that out themselves.

Ilisapi: The child is not really making a mistake because it makes sense to them.

Tipuula: They use their own language until they realize that there is a certain way to say or do something.
Tirisi: My grandchild just recently developed an awareness that the husband was her father and the wife was her mother. She is only discovering these things now.

Ilisapi: I had a problem with a kindergarten class I was teaching. I was advised as to what was correct and what was a mistake. I said that they were only children and that was why they were talking like that. I was told that teenagers do not know how to speak properly anymore. Forget the teenagers, little children have their own language. It is as if the kindergarten children are expected to speak like adults. I was told that I could not teach the kindergarten children anymore. It is only proper to let children speak children’s language first. Today, they are not allowed to make mistakes. There is even a checklist as to what is correct and what is a mistake.

Do you think it would be better to send children to school when they seem ready, rather than based on their age?

Ilisapi: Children that range from five to nine years old are expected to know the same things. Do five and nine year olds use the same language? I asked, “How is it that these children do not speak like children? Do qallunaat children speak like adults?” I was told it was not that way. I think if they are good, it doesn’t matter if they speak like children.

I had a classmate for many years who could not pronounce “uuttiaru,” which means “wait,” properly. Even when I tried to teach her, she would insist that she was saying it the right way. Eventually when she was a teenager, she finally realized what she was saying all along.

Tipuula: Children eventually find things out on their own. They find things out themselves from their surroundings. We should not try and make them do things. We should not try and stop them from trying out new things. Of course, we will not let them do something if it is dangerous.

Were children taught to do things so that they would be prepared for when they became adults?

Tipuula: That is what we were preparing them for. If a child made a mistake, you would wait until the child realized that what he was doing was wrong, as long as it wasn’t dangerous. Sometimes small children try and handle things we do not want them to touch, things that are dangerous. They do not realize what they are doing is wrong. Even when we say no, they do not understand what we mean since we are just saying...
this orally. If you slap them on the hand, they will eventually understand that they are not permitted to touch that. Do not just say no, or try to stop them by talking to them. You have to slap their hand until they understand.

Ilisapi: The qulliq, the seal oil lamp, was out in the open and had a flame, so the baby had to be taught to stay away from that. There were uluit, women’s knives, and sharp objects around. They had to learn not to touch those things for they were dangerous.

Tipuula: If you just tell them, “No, do not touch that,” they will never learn. They will keep trying to touch things you do not want them to. If you slap their hand while you are speaking to them, they will eventually start to look at you before they touch anything.

You have to watch them.

Tipuula: Children do not forget. They start learning what they are not allowed to do right away. They even start to tell other children what they are not allowed to.

How can we help a child to develop intellectually?

Ilisapi: There are people around who think differently, but I think it is best if we follow the advice our mothers gave us, so that we don’t run into problems. If we follow our mothers’ advice it is better, because their advice is based on experience. We should listen to our mothers, so that we don’t encounter anything that becomes too difficult to handle.

How can we develop their ability to think?

Tipuula: We were taught how to think while we were growing up. We weren’t taught other people’s ideas; we learned how to make decisions of our own. If we felt something was right, we accepted it, and if we felt it was wrong, we didn’t. We had to learn to think for ourselves.

Ilisapi: We do not really teach children how to think. We all think differently. As I said earlier, children today seem to be expected to speak like adults. When this happens, they are so used to being pushed, they can’t think on their own. They will only do things if they have been told to do so.

Does this happen when they aren’t given the chance to just be children?

Tipuula: Yes.
Ilisapi: Children tell themselves that they will only do things if they are told to. It seems we have to keep telling them what to do these days. “Dress warmly,” or “Get dressed.” They just sit and wait to be told what to do since they have never really done anything on their own. I have often noticed this about children who go to school.

Were children taught during childhood not to just wait around to be told what to do?

Ilisapi: Yes. Children are all different. Today they have to sit and write in school. Some of them enjoy writing and some start writing and then get bored. I guess their nostrils get too warm so they start getting nervous.

Tipuula: Their breathing changes.

Ilisapi: Even when we carried our children on our backs, their breathing changed when they wanted to go outside. Once children enter school, they are expected to learn at the same level. There are a lot of children in a classroom. If a child has behavioural problems they are singled out. I am sure they want to behave like the other children, but it is their desire to be outside that causes them to misbehave.

We are all different from each other.

Tipuula: It is unnatural for children to be indoors while they are growing up.

Ilisapi: I think that was the reason why some didn’t graduate. I think the reason why the older ones didn’t graduate was because when they were younger we would take them outside in our amautit every time they wanted to go outside, especially boys. They were the ones who often did not finish school, especially the ones who thought they knew more than their teachers. They would start becoming non-attenders and start doing bad things, not because they were bad, but because they were little boys.

Does this happen when they are told to sit still all the time?

Ilisapi: They are told, “Sit still! Stay still!” until they start getting angry.

Some children are being told what to do to the point where they do not want to listen anymore.

Tipuula: Yes. They hear things so often they don’t listen anymore. Even though they are told to stop something, and they say ‘yes,’ they still continue doing it.
Ilisapi: They want to listen but they have a hard time doing so.

*In the past, adults didn’t give in to a child’s every whim.*

Ilisapi: In the past, there weren’t any gyms that we could tell them to go to.

Tipuula: Even though children we no longer carried didn’t need our undivided attention, we still had to look after them and make sure we fed them regularly. That was the only thing they got cranky about. As long as we fed them and made sure their hands and feet were warm, they would be able to keep themselves content and occupied.

*How were older children dealt with back then?*

Tipuula: When there was a newborn, an older sibling would be cranky for three or four days at the most. They got used to the baby as long as we didn’t tell them to stop crying when they were crying.

Ilisapi: It was obvious that they wanted the attention instead.

Tipuula: Yes. They would cry because they wanted attention. It was okay to let them cry. They would cry for a while and then they would eventually get used to it. The jealousy they felt passed quickly. They got used to being the older child, and would realize that unhappy situations passed.

Ilisapi: You should not put the older child on your back again because if you did that, they would expect you to keep doing it. Our hearts went out to them. Sometimes we would put them on our back while the newborn was being held. After having been carried on your back, this was difficult for them.

Tirisi: It was also difficult when they woke up and were thirsty and wanted to be breastfed.

*There weren’t any bottles back then. Did you breastfeed older children once in a while?*

Tipuula: No. I followed the advice I was given. It was difficult.

An older child would not be breastfed once there was a younger sibling?

Tipuula: I was told not to, to make it easier on them. Although mothers really felt for the older child, you had to think of their future. If you have a lot of milk in your breasts,
you should not use this as an excuse to start breastfeeding them again. If you do, you are setting yourself up for a problem. They will both want to be fed and you will end up feeling like you have twins, even though you don’t. If they were twins, then they would both be fed. I was advised to stop breastfeeding, even before the new baby was born. I was advised to wean the child, so they would have adjusted to this by the time the new baby came. If you did continue to breastfeed right up to the birth of the next child, you were advised to stop this as soon as the baby was born. The first three days and three nights were the hardest for the older child.

Do we tend to create more work for ourselves by telling our children not to cry?

Tipuula: If you tell them they will no longer be breastfed, you have to keep your word. If you say you are not going to breastfeed them anymore and you still do, they will not believe what you say anymore. You have to mean what you say so they will get used to it faster. It is best not to breastfeed the child, even if they are hungry and crying.

Ilisapi: Three times I have breastfed two children at the same time. I had too much milk and my mother advised me to feed the older one and said that he would eventually wean himself. Children are different from each other. My older child was the type who did not think of anyone besides himself. I kept telling him that he would not be breastfed anymore, so when we were going somewhere we left him behind. He got angry, so it was a good thing we left him behind. After that, I fed the newborn and the next youngest at the same time again. I fed them both for quite a long time, until the older one started to realize that the younger one should be feeding more, so he eventually stopped. When the younger one was medivaced for meningitis, the older one continued to breastfeed. He was old enough to play outside with a toy whip and was still breastfeeding. That was a problem.

Was this your older child?

Ilisapi: Yes. When the younger one came back, he was being bottle fed and the older one was still breastfeeding. I did not like the way I was feeding them, so I stopped breastfeeding the older one and fed the younger one. What Tipuula said was true about the problems you create for yourself by continuing to nurse an older child. This older child is now married. He cannot eat raw meat. It is good for men to be able to eat raw meat because sometimes they have nothing to cook with while out hunting. He still cannot eat raw meat today. He had too much milk when he was a child. Some women are stronger than others. It is very tiring to breastfeed two children when you are not very strong.
I wonder if the reason some people cannot eat raw meat is because they were nursed too long?
Ilisapi: Yes. Some children are nursed for too long a time.

No wonder they cannot eat raw meat.
Tipuula: When we had to travel a lot, it was really difficult if we were nursing two babies. The reason why we were advised not to breastfeed two children was because we moved around a lot. We didn’t live in houses. We were constantly moving. It was better not to breastfeed the older child at all. We would travel with our husbands between the Iglulik, Naujaat, Mittimatik and the Tununirusiq areas. Even when we had small children, we still travelled. It was okay to feed an older child solid food when they stopped breast feeding.

From the time they were babies, had their future already been laid out for them?
Tipuula: Boys were prepared for travelling outside when they grew older. They would be hunting in the cold, and they would not eat all day so they prepared them for that. They would be fed small servings in order to get them used to that.
Ilisapi: Even if it was not the best meat.

Tipuula: Food was not always available and the weather did not always cooperate. If a boy was a picky eater, his body would deteriorate quite quickly if what he could eat was not available.

Some children refuse to eat a lot of things today. What did you do to make a child eat. Did you plead with them?
Tipuula: It was best if you just waited for the child to get hungry.

You didn’t force them to eat?
Ilisapi: We would just wait until they got hungry. Then they would eat.

Tirisi: By the time some children got hungry, they were nodding off to sleep, even though they were trying to eat.
These days we really want to make sure our children eat. We even start scolding them when they don’t.

Tipuula: That’s because we are now following a clock. If we were eating and the child did not want to eat, we would wait until the child got hungry and then they would eat. If there was a limited amount of food available, we would try and give them little bites. If there was ample food available, you did not have to try and feed them, you would just wait for the child to get hungry, and they would start eating. You do not have to force a child to eat. I know we get concerned these days about eating at specific times because children go to school.

That is what I do with my daughter once in a while. Sometimes she does not feel like eating, so I just tell myself that she will want something later.

Tipuula: Yes, as long as there is more food, it is alright not to force a child to eat. Children only enjoy eating when they are hungry.

I have a question pertaining to something else. Can you tell that someone is sick just by looking at them?

Tipuula: People who see us often notice a change in us when we are sick, even though we are not aware of it ourselves. The person’s demeanor will change and they will not be themselves. We would be told to take care of people who were not being themselves; for example, if a child had an earache and was being cranky.

Ilisapi: Especially if they were really cranky and pale looking.

Tipuula: One could tell if a child was sick by paying attention to their face and to their demeanor.

Does this also apply to older children and adults?

Tipuula: Yes. They tend not to be themselves and they are usually pale. If someone was feeling lethargic, you could tell.

What did you do if you noticed someone was sick?

Tipuula: We would take more care with a person if we felt there was something wrong. We would pay more attention to them and try to comfort them, depending on what was wrong with them. We would also try to provide whatever the person asked for.
You would let them have their own way?
Tipuula: Temporarily, yes. As soon as they were better, things would get back to normal.

Tirisi: Even when they were better, children tended to carry on for a while.

Tipuula: They were not their usual selves while they were recovering.

Body aches and constipation

I would like to know if you have heard about signs of internal illness appearing on the skin?

Tipuula: Yes. When that happened it was a good sign. These signs differed. When a sick person’s illness erupted on the skin and they didn’t seem to be recovering, this was a very bad sign. If they seemed to have more energy, this was good. If a person who was normally active became lethargic and they ended up with abscesses on their skin, this was not a good sign.

Was this fatal?

Tipuula: If it was not painful and the person was not vomiting, then the sickness was just sitting inside. Some of them died after a short sickness of just three days. I guess there was a rupture of some sort internally.

Tirisi: Probably that was what happened.

Tipuula: If nothing showed up on the skin, I guess a person died from a rupture.

Ilisapi: That only happened occasionally.

Tipuula: That didn’t happen every year; just once in a while.

What about people who look fine? I have a really bad toothache right now. Did they have toothaches back then?

Tipuula: Not at all. Children never had toothaches back then. Toothaches were for old men and women. The only thing that happened to children was that their teeth came out naturally.

Tirisi: Children never had cavities.
Tipuula: Earaches have always been around though.

Ilisapi: When an elder got a toothache, they would remove the tooth themselves.

Tipuula: If they could not remove it themselves, then another person would help them.

Even if the tooth wasn’t loose?

Tipuula: Yes, if they were in a lot of pain. Teeth are different from each other. Some toothaches are so painful that you can black out from the pain. Some teeth can be removed without much pain. Others are deeply embedded. The tooth was removed before the person started blacking out from the pain. If a person was in intense pain, then someone else would have to help them remove it.

What was used to remove the tooth?

Tipuula: Sinew.

Even when the tooth wasn’t loose?

Tipuula: Yes. The person would keep their mouth wide open. I knew of a person who had a really bad toothache. He tied his tooth to a rock with strong thread.

Did his tooth come out?

Tipuula: Yes.

If a child had a loose tooth that came out, was it fed to the dogs?

Tipuula: I have never heard of that.

I heard that children were told to feed their baby teeth to dogs so they would have excellent teeth. They would hide the tooth in palaugaq, bannock, and give it to a dog.

Tipuula: I have never heard of that.

Tirisi: I have never heard of that either.

Ilisapi: Nor can our children’s teeth turn into money.
You have said that children didn’t have toothaches. What other problems did children have?

Ilisapi: Sometimes babies would become constipated when the feces hardened in the intestines. When this happened we had to help them to defecate. They were said to be tuutajut if they were constipated. Some children actually died from this. Have you heard of that?

Tipuula: Yes.

Ilisapi: I think that almost happened to my daughter. She was my only daughter at the time and we were still living with our in-laws then. I noticed she hadn’t defecated for a long time. I thought that she must be urinating and defecating on her own, even though I never noticed her doing this. She never even asked me to wipe her bum, even though I was still doing this for her brothers. Boys only have to remove their pants when they defecate. Girls have to remove theirs whether they peed or pooped. She was quite cranky and pale and it turned out this was from being constipated. Her pants had a bit of poop on them. I found out that her anus was sore.

She was pooping the watery part but she could not get rid of the hard part. I wasn’t paying enough attention. I attempted to help her poop by using the end of a comb and digging it out. I made sure I did not hurt her flesh. Her anus was really sore but I kept telling her to push and it slowly started coming out. When it came to the rim and started coming out, she kept pooping all night. It was a relief.

Tipuula: When they were like that, they could be helped by using the patirniq, a caribou leg bone that had had the marrow removed. The marrow in the bone was removed and the bone was shaped into a tiny scoop. It was used to help people who were constipated.

Ilisapi: The feces would be removed by digging it out.

Tipuula: The term that was used for that was saulluqtuq.

Ilisapi: Today, when this happens, children are taken to the Health Centre right away. We don’t use saulluqtuq any more.

Could soap also be used?

Ilisapi: We used soap a lot for children who were breast feeding because they became constipated a lot.
Tipuula: We wouldn’t use soap with newborns.

Ilisapi: If the intestine was not too full, soap could be used. The intestines could fill up if you didn’t poop regularly.

Tipuula: The feces had to be removed, even if you had to dig it out. Otherwise it could cause death.

Ilisapi: Even if it was an adult that was constipated, the same thing had to be done. You could help someone, even if you weren’t a doctor; you just had to make sure not to damage the flesh. There are things that we can take care of ourselves without spending large amounts of money to send patients off to Iqaluit. Maybe we can do something about this.

Tipuula: Before there were doctors, there were some people that would be requested if medical attention was required. Even if the person lived in another camp, they would be informed if there was a problem. If they were concerned, then they would go and see the sick person.

**Narunalattijuq, sickness that travels through the body; depression, and the value of conversation**

Some diseases travel through the body. Have you heard about this?

Tipuula: I think we all have heard of that.

Ilisapi: That is called *narunalattijuq*.

Tipuula: If a person had a sickness that travelled through the body, that was a bad sign.

Ilisapi: Are you saying that if a person had a pain in one area and it moved to a different area, that was called *narunalattijuq*? Was this considered dangerous?

Tipuula: If one had a pain that kept moving from one area to another, that was considered a bad sign.

Did that used to happen back then too?

Tipuula: Yes. Sometimes, when a person had a pain that moved around in the body, it would just disappear.
Ilisapi: The elderly were the ones who usually suffered from this.

Was there a cure?

Tipuula: It was usually chronic, although occasionally it would disappear completely.

Did it travel through the blood?

Tipuula: I don’t know. It probably did, but we had no means of knowing.

Ilisapi: I have always wanted to ask about this, because I seem to be the only one who has heard of it. I heard that if a person who has constant stomach-aches starts excreting blood, then they will get better.

Tipuula: Having things pass out of the body has always been a good sign. If a woman was having pain in her uterus and nothing came out, that was a bad sign. Even if the woman felt embarrassed, she needed to tell someone. It is the same thing with a stomach-ache. If something started to come out it was a good sign. It was okay not to tell anyone they were in pain, if something was coming out. If nothing was coming out and they were in pain, they needed to tell someone about it. It could be dangerous if nothing passed out of the body. If our urine or feces change in some way, we need to tell someone about it. If we tell someone about it it is less scary. Once the sickness had passed out of the body, the person could recover.

Ilisapi: These days if someone excretes blood, it is considered dangerous. I do not agree with that myself. I think that it is a good sign.

If a person is depressed and does not talk about it, do they just get worse?

Tipuula: Yes, it is similar to what we were just talking about. The pain they are feeling mentally has to come out before they can start healing. Our mind is part of our body as well, so it is similar.

What does it mean if a person is sighing all the time? Did people do that back then too?

Tipuula: People who tended to worry too much were the ones who tended to sigh a lot. If a person worries too much then their breathing changes.

Ilisapi: It is as if they are very tired.
Tipuula: Their breathing sounds like they are tired, either from worry or because their body is feeling discomfort. When a person started to breathe like that, that was one way you could tell they were not feeling well.

How did they help people who were sighing a lot?
Tipuula: I feel better after I sigh. If I do not sigh for a long time, my body starts feeling tired. After I sigh, my body feels better. Am I the only one like this?

Ilisapi: No, but there is a difference if someone sighs too frequently. It is easy to see that something is on their mind. They may think it is only minor and keep it to themselves, but I feel if they talked about what was on their mind, it would help.

I sigh a lot. I am starting to think that sighing is a part of life.
Tipuula: This could be because you are mentally or physically tired. Sighing can be a sign that something is wrong, if you start sighing more than you usually do.

Did people who were chronically ill have to keep strong mentally?
Tipuula: I was raised in a family that was quite healthy. I was exposed to sickness for the first time when I moved in with my in-laws. My father-in-law was chronically ill. His mind was stronger than his body. I found that he was a lot livelier if he did things that he wanted to do once in a while, even though he was advised against this. Being a man, there were certain things he wanted to do and he felt better only after doing them. He knew what his limits were. If he did things he wanted to do once in a while, that really helped him. Some men can never stop doing things. He was always livelier after doing certain things, even though he was advised not to. When I was living with my parents, I never knew about illness as my parents were quite healthy.

Is it better to try and stay active when you are sick?
Tipuula: A person knows their own body and knows their own limits. If we just sit back and do nothing, it can be detrimental. It is good to push yourself once in a while. Before we realize that we are sick, we try and do things normally, but this can be really tiring. Once we know that we are sick, then we know when to stop before we get too tired. We can only learn by trial and error. I have experienced this myself.

Did people get depressed back then too? Did some people react violently when they were depressed?
Tipuula: Those who were chronically ill were often depressed.
Tirisi: Depression is definitely connected to the weather.

Tipuula: Yes. People are definitely affected by the weather. People who had chronic heart problems and those who had pain in certain areas of their bodies were always affected by the weather. We didn’t worry about them taking a turn for the worse during a full moon because this happened monthly. Women’s bodies change when they are going to have their period. It’s a regular occurrence. It’s the same thing for those who have a chronic illness.

How did they try and help them mentally?

Tipuula: We would try and cheer them up, since we all knew they were not going to die. Their families tried to maintain a cheerful atmosphere around them. They would eventually get over feeling depressed. If a person is feeling discomfort, and hearing negative things, this can make them even more unhappy, even though the negativity is not directed at them. For that reason, you need to maintain a cheerful atmosphere around someone who is feeling depressed. That way it is easier for them to get over their depression.

We see women on television who have beautiful bodies and beautiful blonde hair. In the past did people value a person’s physical appearance as well, or did they value a person’s inner characteristics?

Tipuula: I was told not to judge a person solely on their appearance. I was advised if I was going to judge someone, it should be on how well they could make things such as clothing. If I liked a certain woman’s work, I would try and make something similar. If I did not like it, then I would not try and copy it. I was advised never to judge a person or to say that they were good or bad.

Ilisapi: A person would be advised not to worry all the time. If they did so they would tend to make themselves sick. It is better to talk to someone about what you are worried about, even if it is not directly to the person that is causing you to worry.

Tipuula: They could talk to anyone they felt comfortable with.

Ilisapi: Yes. The person should talk to anyone who will listen to them, even if the person is older or younger than they are, as long as the person is trustworthy and doesn’t talk about what is being said. Sometimes you tell someone something in a confidence and much later, you hear back what you said. The person you trusted broke your trust. You should find someone you feel comfortable talking with, who identifies with your
problems, even if it is a young person. That is what I have heard. Women used to say some teenagers were really easy to talk to and were really kind and welcoming. If you don’t feel comfortable speaking with a fellow adult or an elder, a teenager can sometimes be a good person to talk to.

**Tipuula:** You need to find someone who is easy to talk to.

**Tirisi:** Yes, definitely. You can end up helping each other.

**Ilisapi:** We have to constantly try to cleanse ourselves. Just as our clothing gets dirty and needs to be cleansed, our minds do too. Life has always been a combination of good and bad, like a very nice day and a stormy day.

**Tipuula:** We tend to experience good things and bad things in life. Feelings of pain and loss do occur, but they pass.

**Ilisapi:** You have to constantly try to make your life better. Eventually, all bad things pass.

**Tipuula:** It is better to deal with a problem right away and admit what is bothering you. If you deal with things immediately, it is easier to avoid stress. If you cannot find a person to talk to, you can always turn to God for he is forever listening to us.

**Ilisapi:** Our life today is entirely different from the life we lived back then. Our belief in God becomes stronger as we get older. As we grow older we know for a fact that it is better to talk about things. We know the sea is calm on some days and rough on other days. It is hard trying to understand our young people today. We should tell them that the roughness will pass and the calmness will come again. It is hard to try and think about what kind of advice to give them. I try not to feel intimidated in situations I find threatening. I find comfort in expecting the rough seas to pass. It is not only you young people who go through hard times, we elders do as well. Only those who try and comfort each other and let things out can avoid getting chronically ill. It is very tiring to live an unhappy life.

*Were you advised not to worry about the next day’s food and clothing?*

**Ilisapi:** Yes. We were also advised not to be stingy. We would be told there would be more food later on.
Tipuula: We were told there would be more food later on. We just had to wait and have patience. Sometimes it was hard to be patient. When we ran out of food we would cry. The future looked bright again after the hardship had passed.

Ilisapi: We were often left behind when the men went out hunting. They would sometimes travel for days searching for food. After they left, sometimes we were sad while we were waiting for them to return. Our dwellings were not too warm, and we became tired of looking after the children. Then all of a sudden, they would arrive quite unexpectedly. We never knew when they would be back. After they returned, it seemed as if we had not gone through any hardship at all.

I guess women had to be able to do a lot of things because they were often left behind.

Ilisapi: It was for that reason that we were trained to do many things from childhood. We were often left behind. I sometimes used to lose hope that my husband would come back. I thought that we would go hungry. These thoughts often went through my mind. That never happened though. The men would come back with their catch after travelling by dogteam. Then everything would seem right all of a sudden, and the awful feelings would go away. When you had a new husband you had to adapt to living with your in-laws. When you moved in with your in-laws, life was different from living with your parents. You entered into a new life.

Tipuula: We were prepared for this from childhood. We would end up following a different way of life than we were accustomed to.

Ilisapi: When you get a husband you end up with a family that is either more capable or less capable than the family you grew up with. Either way can cause difficulty. People did not give in to you and you were not always fed like you were before. You have to try and raise your children properly, even though you love them a lot because they are named after someone you hold dear. You shouldn’t treat your child as special just because they are named after a loved one. You have to prepare a child for the future. Somewhere down the road, they will live with a family that is completely different from the one they were born into.

Childrearing
What was done to children that misbehaved too much?
Ilisapi: They were given a spanking.
Tipuula: We were taught to spank a child in a place where they would not be hurt physically, such as on the buttocks because there are no bones to break there. We were told never to hit a child on the head. We would try to correct their behaviour so they could live a good life.

Ilisapi: We were also advised not to abuse a child.

Tipuula: If it was a boy, it was his father’s responsibility to discipline him. If he only wanted to spank him once, then he would only spank him once. He would behave for a while, and if he started to misbehave again, the father could spank him a second time. We women took care of our daughters. Some children reached adulthood without ever needing a spanking. Some of them needed to be spanked, and would thank us when they were older for correcting them. Parents would spank children to make them aware of things they had not been paying attention to. Some children were spanked when they did not deserve it and this was bad for a child’s development. When they realized they did not deserve a spanking, they became angry. Children who deserved to be spanked grew up being thankful for the discipline they received. Children who did not deserve to be spanked grew up to become angry people.

Can you spank a child too much?

Tipuula: If they do not deserve it, you should not spank them at all.

Ilisapi: Some of us tended to take out our frustration on our children when it was our husband who we were angry at. Even if the child had done nothing wrong, if he made one small mistake, we took out our frustration on him. If children were treated like that, they could be damaged. It was their spouse they were angry at in the first place but they took their frustration out on their child. That is not the way to treat a child. It is not good.

You should not spank them when they don’t deserve it?

Ilisapi: Sometimes we make mistakes, at least I did. My mother-in-law told me that even though I did not think I was angry, I reacted to things at the spur of the moment, when it was really something else that was bothering me.

Do you think it has always been like this?

Tipuula: If you take out your frustrations on a child who doesn’t deserve it at the spur of the moment, it catches you off guard.
Ilisapi: You have to make the child understand that what you did was done at the spur of the moment and was never intended. You have to tell them that you are not angry at them, that you are angry at something else. That way they understand.

Tipuula: After you discipline children, you should wait until they stop crying before you talk to them about the situation, and let them know that what they did was wrong. Make sure that discipline is followed by affection. Once children realize that you love them, they understand more and they behave better for a longer period of time. If you do not talk to them about the situation afterwards, then they tend to misbehave more frequently.

Should we only talk to them after they stop crying?

Tipuula: Yes. When they are finished crying and are feeling better, that is a good time to talk to them. You need to explain the situation. Let them know you do not like spanking them but what they did required discipline. Once they understand that, they will feel closer to the mother or the father. Things are completely different today. We only reprimand our children verbally because we are not allowed to use physical discipline with our children anymore.

Tirisi: Things are completely different today.

Tipuula: Children are different these days. Even in school they are hard to handle. No wonder, we are only reprimanding them verbally.

Although they should be listening to us, it seems we have to listen to them instead.

Tipuula: We are not allowed to discipline them physically anymore, even if they are misbehaving. We have to reprimand them verbally now. We will run into difficulties with the law if we discipline them physically.

Did adults cry openly in the presence of children?

Tipuula: When somebody died the adults cried openly, even when there were children present. If a husband is abusing his wife, he shouldn’t do it in front of the children.

Ilisapi: The children don’t understand what is going on.

Tipuula: Yes. They don’t understand the reasons for the violence.
Ilisapi: Couples did not fight as often back then. I never saw a husband angry at his wife. Of course, couples would argue once in a while. They would say things like, “Stop rushing me, you are rushing me too much!” They would speak to each other like that from time to time. This was only verbal.

Tipuula: Men often scolded their wives by telling them to hurry up. Back then there were no drugs or alcohol available that provoked anger. It is only when those became available that we started having real problems.

Ilisapi: When a man got ready to go hunting and he realized that his kamiik were not dry he would tell his wife, “You did not dry my kamiik!” Young wives forgot to dry their husband’s kamiik and their husbands would scold them. Couples did not always have perfect relationships.

Tipuula: The happy times outweighed the bad times.

Ilisapi: We did not hurt each other physically.

Tipuula: While we were experiencing a problem, it would seem quite big though.

Ilisapi: We tried not to feel bad if our husbands did not catch anything, even though we hoped they would have a successful hunt. They hunted for us because they loved us. We would say, “You’ll do better next time,” and it made them feel better.

You mentioned yesterday that you made a pisiq, a song, while people were going through a time of hunger. Can you sing it?

Ilisapi: It was not me that made the song. Our ancestors created songs when they endured hardship. Even though men had the ability to catch animals, they made songs to help them catch more because they didn’t think they were very capable.

Tipuula: When they went through joyous times, they also sang about them. When they went through hardship, they created songs from the thoughts that went through their minds. They would sing songs about their experiences so others could learn from them.

Tirisi: Pisiit are really enjoyable to listen to.

Tipuula: Yes, some of the pisiit are really good.

Tirisi: Most of the pisiit have not been written down.
Ilisapi: There was a man who recovered after being really sick during the winter. Once he got better, he created this song. I think I sang this one for you before.

Alianaittuqaqpuq. Inuunialiqpunga. Ulluk suli tauvva.
There is joy. I will survive. There is still daylight.

Akuttujuuk angutinuk. Ulluk suli tauvva
The akuttujuuk have caught up. There is still daylight.

Quviasuliqpunga inuunialirama. Ulluk suli tauvva
I am happy because I will live. There is still daylight.

He had been really sick and thought he was going to die of hunger because he had been unable to hunt. He got better as the days grew longer. That’s when he made this song. He made this pisiq when the daylight was returning.

Was he an elder?
Ilisapi: He was not that old. He was still capable of hunting. In the past some young people made songs while they still had good voices. We only learned these songs from elders, when their voices were not as good anymore.

Who taught you how to care for people when they were sick?
Tipuula: Our mothers taught us how to help people who were sick. They would tell us to go and check to see if they needed help with chores, such as checking to see if the qulliq required oil. Our mothers were busy so they often asked us to go and check up on someone who was sick. If our mothers had enough oil, we would take some to the sick person. If the person was really sick and did not have help available, we would fetch water or ice for them.

We were taught to help sick people. We were taught not to tell if we fought with someone, if we argued, or if we got hurt as long as we hadn’t damaged our eyes, but we were supposed to tell them if there was someone who was less fortunate than we were that required our assistance. Our mothers only wanted to hear about people who needed help. If we were too young to do something ourselves, we had to let our mothers know if there was a sick person who was lacking oil, or who needed to have their quwvik, chamberpots, emptied. When we were older we were encouraged to do these things ourselves.
Ilisapi: When I was twelve years old, I had to help a girl who had broken her back. I helped look after her from May until August. She eventually passed away in August. There were no nurses then. She was only twelve years old. My mother did not help at all. She would tell me to go and help. Even when I was sleeping, the girl would send someone over for me. When I did not feel like going, my mother would tell me that the girl was not going to be here for much longer. I would end up going. The girl was slightly older than I was, but I really felt for her. She was capable of doing everything before this. After her accident happened, she deteriorated rapidly. She had an awful stench about her and she lost a lot of weight. Her brother would come over and inform me that his sister required assistance going to the bathroom. I do not think my mother was capable of dealing with people who were injured, so she would send me in her place. That is how I learned how to take care of sick people. Some men and women are really good at taking care of sick people.

Tipuula: Some people are very capable at taking care of the sick.

Ilisapi: When a sick person finds someone who makes them more comfortable than others, they tend to prefer that person.

Tipuula: When I was about twelve years old as well, I had to help a woman in our camp who had bad lungs. She had a child and she could only get around by holding onto something. I also used to be woken up when I was sleeping so that I could go and carry her baby around and look after him. She was not related to us but I had to go look after her child for her because she was really ill. I did that for about two months. Back in those days we didn’t have any diapers so I had to make him pee. When I became an adult, when a woman went into labour I was requested. I was treated something like a doctor on call when someone was in labour, or was sick, or had an accident or showed signs that they would be dying shortly. Even when I was sleeping, someone would come over to wake me up. I had no choice but to go, although some people who were requested did not go if they did not want to.

Ilisapi: If they found someone they could count on, they tended to rely on them. There was one time I was even fetched by boat. It was not too long ago. Someone came to get me by boat even though the seas were rough because a woman was in labour.

Tipuula: I too was fetched by a person from another camp because a woman was in labour. I was quite pregnant myself. I had a baby on my back and started walking towards their camp. Twice women have come from other camps so I could deliver their babies. We used to be called upon before there were doctors. Thank goodness we have doctors now.
Is it really necessary to listen to your parents?

Ilisapi: Listening to your parents is not only important for today; it affects the future as well.

Tipuula: Even if we do not feel like following what we are told, we have to try and overcome that. We have to try and overcome obstacles when we are required to do something.

We probably ask too many questions, but once you have your own children you really want to gain more knowledge.

Ilisapi: We prefer it when you ask questions.

Tipuula: Definitely. It’s easier for us to talk if you ask us questions.

Tirisi: When you ask us questions we are not reluctant to answer.

I am really grateful that I came here as I have learned a lot from you about raising my children.

Tirisi: We have forgotten some things but when you ask us questions it helps us to remember them.

Tipuula: We were advised not to give in to children even if they cried. If you give in to them, then they tend to try and get their own way all the time when they grow up.

Ilisapi: This is especially true for boys.

I think this is a practice that should be revived.

Tipuula: You have to make sure you raise them like that from the beginning. Some children are really hard to handle but you have to be firm. Some people cannot stand up to their children when they want something.

Were children said to be ivvarluktuq when they couldn’t get comfortable in bed?

Ilisapi: If they are accustomed to sleeping in a nice warm bed, when it is cold they don’t want to sleep. They learn to be like that from the time they are small. If a child who wants to play outside isn’t taken out much, then he does not mind being indoors. My
mother and my mother-in-law were very different from each other. My mother would advise against taking a child outside too often because then he would want to be outside all the time. Therefore, I would have to be outside all the time. My mother felt like this because she was always busy making something inside. My mother-in-law was not the type who made things all the time so she tended to spend more time outside with her children. They were very different from each other. I only really became aware of this when I looked back later. When I was making something, my mother-in-law would tell me that I would have time to do it later and to tend to the children for now. My mother would advise against taking the children out. I preferred my mother-in-law’s advice as I had more time to work on what I was making after having taken the children out visiting or having spent some time outside with them. I did not agree with my mother’s advice. There are different ways that people do things.

Tipuula: Some people say if we do not spend time outside with our children, we spend even more time scolding them.

Ilisapi: If a child wants to be outside, they cannot concentrate as much.

*Children behave really well when they are playing outside.*

Tipuula: It is best to take boys out once in awhile. It’s not really that necessary for girls. It is okay if they stay in all day as it does not affect their breathing. It is even different when you are pregnant with a boy or a girl. Girls tend to come out faster than boys.

**The need to return to traditional midwifery**

Ilisapi: I have been thinking that there should be a committee at the Health Centre that could decide whether a person should fly out to Iqaluit for medical attention. They should be able to decide if a person should go or stay. Some pregnant women have no reason to go out. They are monitored in the community and then are sent to Iqaluit for further monitoring. They end up spending a lot of money unnecessarily on perfectly healthy women. No wonder the government has no money! We know that some medical problems that could be dealt with in the community are referred to Iqaluit. Inuit should have more control over this.

*Do you think that traditional midwifery should be revived?*

Ilisapi: More care could be given to cancer patients and to those who are terminally ill if money wasn’t wasted. Some sicknesses are not that serious at all. I think there should
be more control over who is sent to Iqaluit. We want those who are really sick to be sent out, but some medical problems should be dealt with in the community. We should set up a committee to deal with this.

*Maybe you should start a committee in your community. We have a committee in our community.*

**Ilisapi:** It is easy to tell if a woman is having a healthy pregnancy. If the blood is good, then their pregnancy will be fine. Some women find even the early stages of their pregnancies uncomfortable. Those women need to be monitored closely. As long as they are not too young, there is no need to send them out of the community. If they are not too young, there is no need to send them out.

**Tipuula:** I have delivered twice in the hospital and thirteen times amongst Inuit, six of which when I was alone with my husband.

**Ilisapi:** I have delivered twice in the hospital and nine times amongst Inuit. It is frustrating when you deliver in the hospital for the first time as you are not used to delivering in that environment. There are people walking around when you are about to have the baby. It is scary.

**Tipuula:** Women who were in labour used to be well taken care of. It is hard for a woman to deliver when there are too many people around. Some women are not bothered at all by people roaming around. A delivery should be comfortable and it shouldn’t take any more time than is necessary. Some women are not bothered at all if there are people walking around while they are in labour.

**Ilisapi:** They do not mind at all.

**Tipuula:** There are two types of women in labour; those who are too quick to react and those who take things in stride. Both types require great care even if they are delivering in a hospital. Some babies are *aiktumajut*, reluctant to come out because they are upside down and they are scared of their blood. These are babies that are in a breech position, or are not properly positioned to come out.
Broken bones and dislocated joints

Tipuula: If a person has a dislocated joint, the doctors advise us not to move the injured part at all. People with a dislocated joint are medivac'd. It’s not that difficult to put a dislocated joint back in place. Accident victims who did not have broken bones were harder to help than those who did. We could do something for a broken bone, but it is difficult to help if there has been an internal injury. My husband used to get a dislocated shoulder.

What was done to help those who had broken collar bones?

Ilisapi: This here is the qutuq, the collar bone. When it breaks it is called qutuaqtuq. The joint connecting the shoulder blade to the humerus is called the nigalluq. When it is injured, this is called nigalluaqtuq.

Tipuula: You cannot fix a collar bone. You can put a shoulder sling on to help, but you cannot heal it. You can fix something that has been dislocated though.

By pulling on it?

Tipuula: Yes.

Ilisapi: You can hear it snap back into place.

Tipuula: Yes, when it goes back in the socket you know it is fixed. There was a person that dislocated his shoulder when we were out on the land. We were advised to leave the injury as it was, for the doctors feared we might damage the tendon or get it caught between the bones by trying to put it back.

Ilisapi: And here he was in pain.

Tipuula: It was only after the plane picked him up, that he received an anesthetic and they finally fixed the dislocation. We used to fix dislocated joints in no time as long as the bone was not broken.

Ilisapi: One of my grandsons dislocated his shoulder in Iqaluit and while he was anesthetized they put it back into position at the hospital. That happened again when he was playing hockey when he was down south. That time he sat in a chair and put it back in place himself. After that, he put it back in place himself whenever that happened. It is becoming bothersome for him as this has happened repeatedly.
Tipuula: My leg was dislocated before and it was at such an odd angle it was next to my body.

Ilisapi: How did that happen?

Tipuula: It happened when I was urinating. All of a sudden my leg snapped and it was lying beside me. I attempted to put it back in place repeatedly but every time I let go of it, it would snap right back to my side. This happened three times.

Ilisapi: Was this while you had your pants down?

Tipuula: Yes. There was a rough area of ice. I started worrying about my foot getting caught on a nilak, a piece of ice, so I tried to put it back in place. I positioned my foot in a certain way and attempted to put it back until I was successful.

Ilisapi: Were you in a lot of pain?

Tipuula: I could feel the pain. After it snapped back into position, the pain was gone. Luckily, the bones were not damaged.

Does your grandson who repeatedly dislocates his shoulder need surgery?

Ilisapi: The doctors told my grandson he needed surgery, but he said he didn’t want it. I told him it is because he plays too much hockey that this keeps happening.

What did you say about a dislocated hip?

Tirisi: It is not easy to put a dislocated hip back in place. It is harder to put some joints back than others. You really have to pull hard to get some back in place.

Ilisapi: You put your foot in between the person’s legs and pull. That is how you fix a dislocated hip.

Tirisi: You can also wrap your arms around the leg and pull on it while sitting with your back to the patient. That is another way of putting it back in position.

Could a person’s jaw also become dislocated?

Tipuula: Something happened to my grandchild’s jaw and four of his teeth came out.
Ilisapi: My brother dropped a rock on his finger while he was making a cache and the tip broke off. He came over and told me to light up the Coleman stove. Here he was younger than me. He told me to heat up some water and he kept moaning. He did not tell me that part of his finger had come off as I guess he was afraid that I might faint. My mother was also with us. When the water heated up he dipped his finger in it while moaning in pain. I guess he was in shock. My mother applied a bandaid. He was in a lot of pain until it started to dry up. The muscles were hanging and you could see the bone. Once the bone had been sawed off, it was better as it had tended to get caught on things. My mother drilled a hole in a piece of wood and he inserted his finger so it could be held in place while she sawed it off.

Tipuula: Yes. Fingers have to amputated when they are like that.

*They did not try and reattach them?*

Ilisapi: They did not try to reattach them as the muscles were damaged. The part of the finger that was removed was left on top of a barrel for a long time and dried up with its nail intact. The finger eventually healed after being covered in bandaids. My brother has a part of his finger missing.

Tipuula: Sometimes people got a cut at a joint and it would get infected and abscess. If the cut was not down to the bone, they would dip the finger in heated salt water. That way the swelling eventually went down.

*Would the water the finger was dipped in be kept heated?*

Tipuula: No. They would dip their finger in and out while the water was hot. They would dip their finger in and out of the water, until the water cooled down. That is what we did with my husband’s hand when there were no doctors around and it was swollen. I fetched water from the sea and heated it up when his hand was swollen. He would dip it in and out of water until it was cool enough for him to leave it in the water. Then the swelling would go down. That is what we did before there were doctors.

What did they do when someone broke a bone?

Ilisapi: It did not take too long for a broken bone to heal. People with broken bones seemed to heal faster back then. When a child broke a bone, they would rub oil on the area where the bone had been broken. Even if the bone did not have a splint on it, it would heal quite quickly.
Tipuula: One of our friends broke a bone and they had to carry him on a stretcher to get him home. The adults consulted with each other. There was a dried bearded sealskin and they used it as a splint for his leg. They used a caribou skin for padding. It was fixed so that he could not bend it. He crawled around for a week. The next week, he was walking again. The splint was made from dried bearded sealskin which had not been softened so it was quite stiff. The sealskin was measured with a rope before it was applied so that it would fit properly. The leg would be bound after the swelling had gone down because it could be very painful otherwise.

Ilisapi: It tended to get too tight if they didn’t wait for the swelling to go down first.

Tipuula: Once the swelling had started to subside, the sealskin would be measured and bound to the leg with padding inside. The padding was not very thick. It was quite thin.

Was it only after the swelling had started to subside, that the skin would be applied?

Tipuula: Yes, if it was still swelling, the sealskin could end up being too tight and it could be very painful. The same thing was done if an arm had been broken. My daughter broke the upper part of her leg and we did not have any dried skin so I placed some cardboard in layers around it and used that for a splint. We were in an outpost camp. The cardboard I used for the splint helped it heal. We could not just wait for things to happen. We had no choice but to try and solve our problems ourselves.

Tirisi: We were really capable.

Tipuula: We did not think that we were very capable. All we could do was try our best. We used to hear about people who had lung infections. When they were sick, they tended to just want to lie down. If their lungs were infected, they needed to keep moving around so that the mucous would not just sit in their lungs.

Ilisapi: They needed to keep moving around.

Tipuula: Yes, they could not just stay put. Even though they were in pain, they were not allowed to stay still. If they did not move around, they could end up being sick for a long time. They had to move around so they would get over the sickness more quickly. If they were quqqaqtuaq, too sick to move at all, we were advised to leave them be or else the lungs might rupture. We were not to move them around. We just made sure they were comfortable. Some people had a hard time breathing when they had a lung infection.
What do you mean by quqqaqtuq?

Tipuula: It is when a person is so sick, they cannot move.

Tirisi: It feels as though you are being stabbed.

Tipuula: It feels as though you are being stabbed. Some people feel like they have a piercing pain. We try and make those who are in that kind of pain as comfortable as possible. If we are in a place where there aren’t any nurses, and the person can still move around, we have to make sure that they do. That way, they can heal faster. We have been told that if a person stays put, they will be sick much longer. It seems to be that way.

How did they help people who had stomach-aches?

Tipuula: If someone had a really severe stomach-ache, they would be told to lie on their back and someone would knead their stomach area. Sometimes the intestines were said to be twisted so they were moved around in the stomach.

We could also make an ice pack and place it carefully on the stomach. It could be effective. If there was no ice, snow could be used. If that did not help, we would try a hot pad instead, which we made by heating sand in a pouch.

Headaches

Were snow packs used for headaches?

Tipuula: Yes, they were used for people who had headaches and for those who had nosebleeds. They would put snow at the bridge of the nose when someone had a nosebleed and put snow in their mouth when they had a headache. I worry about people who get headaches nowadays.

Ilisapi: They don’t put bands around their heads any more.

Tirisi: The bands would be tied very tight.

Tipuula: They would be very tight. It’s surprising that the veins didn’t pop.

Ilisapi: People with headaches felt better when they had a headband on.

Tirisi: The head felt somewhat lighter.
Tipuula: After the headband was tied, the headache was not as bad as before; maybe because there was so much pressure on the veins.

Ilisapi: They couldn’t use it for a long time though.

Tipuula: The name for a headband was a niaquuti.

Swallowing polyps

Have you ever heard of a person sneezing out a polyp through their nostrils? If that happened, did they have to swallow it?

Tipuula: Yes, we have all heard of that.

Ilisapi: When it came out after sneezing, it was recommended we swallow it so that the person would live longer. It has been said that if a person sneezes out a polyp, it is a sign they don’t have much longer to live. I don’t know if this is true or not. If someone was quite sick and started sneezing, it was said the chances were he would live. If he was not sneezing or yawning, that was a bad sign. When he started yawning, people thought he might recover and return to his normal self.

Will people who are sick in bed recover when that happens?

Tipuula: As long as they have some signs of recovery they will.

Can you explain further what you meant when you said to put the polyp into something?

Ilisapi: If you were squeamish about swallowing it just like that, you could put it in a little piece of meat or palaugaq, and swallow it without chewing it.

Has anybody died because they did not swallow their polyp?

Tirisi: Probably they knew of someone that happened to.

Treating eye infections with lice

Ilisapi: I am sure lice were not useful for our bodies.

Tipuula: I have heard that they were very useful for people who had eye infections that were not caused by snow-blindness. A head or body louse was tied to a strand of hair,
and put in the eye that had become infected. The louse would walk around in the eye. After it was removed, the louse’s legs were covered with the infected matter, which it removed from the eye. A person who was going blind was then able to see.

Tirisi: I guess when the infected matter covering the eye was removed the person was able to see better.

Ilisapi: The louse would be tied at its head. It would be put in the eye, and would walk around and collect the infected matter. It was said that the louse would be unable to walk once its legs were completely covered. The person would wait until the louse stopped moving around before removing it. When it was removed, the legs were all covered with the infected matter.

*The film that had collected on the eye could be removed?*

Tipuula: The person would be able to see once the louse had removed this film.

*Did you squash the louse after?*

Ilisapi: After you had finished using it you would squash it.

Tipuula: Breast milk was used to heal badly infected eyes caused from snow-blindness.

**Hypothermia**

*What was done to someone who fell in the water who was becoming hypothermic?*

Ilisapi: When someone falls in the water they become cold immediately because of the temperature of the water. My father fell in the water once while he was out boating. He managed to get back in the boat but fell back out again. When he got back in the boat again he lost consciousness. Those who have fallen in the water lose consciousness very quickly because the water is so cold. He was brought to shore. This happened in the days before there were doctors. All his clothing was removed in the tent and an adult man crawled into bed with him. While he was still unconscious they made him vomit. His genital area was warmed up by the man placing his leg between my father’s legs. He also concentrated on warming up my father’s abdomen. He was unconscious for a while. When he started warming up, he regained consciousness. They say you need to pay particular attention to their orifices.
Tirisi: You need to make sure their heads were warmed up as well.

Tipuula: I too have heard you needed to pay attention to the orifices. I too have heard about someone with hypothermia being warmed up in the same way.

Ilisapi: You have to warm them up first. That way you start warming up their insides.

*Was there any need to raise the temperature in the iglu?*

Tipuula: If a person falls in the water you have to warm their whole body up. Once two people fell in the water and I had to lie down with one of them to help him warm up. I undressed the younger of the two with my mother-in-law. The other person’s older brother and sister-in-law lay down with him. The whole body has to be warmed up by another person’s flesh. We have to try and pass on our warmth to them.

*Did you remove all their clothing?*

Tipuula: Yes, all their clothing had to be removed. They tend to be really cold. It is hard to give them a drink because their teeth are really chattering and the water tends to drip out of the mouth. My mother-in-law and I would take turns warming him up. When I got cold my mother-in-law would take over. Once he was able to drink, we gave him small amounts of lukewarm water. As he warmed up internally he became more aware of his surroundings, as did his brother. All his clothing had to be removed. We had to take off our own clothing as well. Since there was only our family, we had no one else to turn to.

Ilisapi: We would be really scared when accidents happened.

*What is the meaning of the word angmaniit?*

Ilisapi: It refers to the penis and scrotum of a man, or to the vagina of a woman. This also includes the anus. We did not use specific terms for those. They were always generalized.

Tirisi: Under normal circumstances the genital area was considered private.

**Sore throats**

*Was blubber given to those who had sore throats or colds?*

Tipuula: It was given to those who had difficulty swallowing.
Is sanittinnaq when someone has an infected mouth?

Ilisapi: Sanittinnaqtuq is when it is hard for a person to swallow.

Is this word only used when a person finds it difficult to swallow?

Ilisapi: It is when a person is making an effort to do something that he finds difficult. Our dialects are different too.

Tipuula: It is not easy to say things in a different dialect.

We don’t have that word in our dialect. There are some words that we are hearing here for the first time.

Tipuula: A person who is sanittinnaqtuq finds it difficult to swallow meat, so they are given blubber because it is easier to swallow. People who have a mouth infection or a sore throat can become very hungry.

Tirisi: Some of them cannot even eat at all.

Burns

What would have been done for people who had really bad burns back then?

Tirisi: Burns tend to become infected so you have to remove the infection.

Ilisapi: You had to try not to remove the skin when you did this. Even if it was just a small burn, the damage could be severe.

Tipuula: We used to apply oil to ease the pain. My son burned his face really badly, to the point where his flesh started sagging. Even the cartilage in his ear was damaged. When his burns got infected, we used a needle to drain them.

Ilisapi: Did he burn himself on a Coleman stove?

Tipuula: No, on a qulliq. There was tea brewing. He fell on the stove and spilled the boiling water on himself. The skin got infected. We used to apply oil so the skin would not peel off. It eventually healed.

Ilisapi: Was the cartilage showing?
Tipuula: Yes, this happened to my son Joshua who was named after my brother Qannguq. While his burns were drying up we applied oil. Fortunately, they healed quickly.

Ilisapi: I am sure he really cried while you were doing this.

Tipuula: For sure! He is named after my brother who drowned. His body was never found. We were living with people who had known my brother at the time my son burned himself. The tea was brewing so we could have it after we finished praying. He ran into the *qulliq* and spilled the tea on himself. I did not catch him in time. When I put him on my back he was in so much pain that he was kicking, biting, and scratching. We really thought that he had lost his eyesight.

Ilisapi: He must have been in a lot of pain.

*Did you take him outside?*

Tipuula: No, I didn’t take him outside. When he wanted to come out of my *amauti* I took him out. At this point he was just crying normally. Before that, he had been crying almost constantly. Then he started to open his eyes a little at a time. I said, “His eyes are fine.” One of our visitors, in reference to my brother Qannguq said, “Qannguq has just fallen in the water.” We were so relieved that his eyes were fine that we started to laugh. That had been a scary experience.

Tirisi: There was one little girl, whom I delivered, who was so badly burned by water that I thought her intestines were going to come out. They had just arrived at a tent where there were quite a few people. She fell onto a *qulliq* that had hot tea on it.

*Did you put oil on the burn?*

Tirisi: Yes, we applied oil. Before we did that there had been liquid seeping out of it.

*Could you see the intestines?*

Tirisi: Almost. The bottom layer of the skin was intact but the top layers had been burned away.

Ilisapi: Was the flesh gone?

Tirisi: Yes.
Were the intestines almost visible?
Tirisi: Yes. When she was crying and breathing heavily, they were almost visible.

I hope that never happens to my children.

Disabilities and death
Tipuula: We had a grandfather who lived with us, who passed away at our home. He was handicapped. When he was born, they wanted to let him die. They said that he would be of no use as his hands were deformed, but somebody said to let him live as he would die on his own eventually. From what I saw, he ended up being very capable.

Were some babies killed before they were named?
Tipuula: I have no idea. Babies were not killed in our area. From what I have heard that was done in the Kivalliq area.

Ilisapi: This happened because of hardship and hunger.

Tipuula: I guess this was because they bore too many children. I don’t know this for sure though, as that was not done in our area. There were always only a few of us. It is only quite recently that our population has started to grow.

Ilisapi: My grandfather had a lump on his hand too.

Tipuula: It was on his left middle finger.

Ilisapi: It was said he used to wear a mitten when he was a child.

Tirisi: Later on he always wore a covering over that finger, perhaps because it was susceptible to the cold.

Ilisapi: I do not remember him at all. I was born in 1931 and he died in 1932. They left shortly after I was born. When he got ill, they returned to the Talluruti area.

What preparations were made after a person died?
Ilisapi: When people lived in small family groups they had no choice but to deal with the body themselves. They would wrap the body and bury it.
Tipuula: Pitsiulaaq’s wife, Alaralak’s mother, walked around with the help of a cane because she was so bent over. We thought she had a dislocated hip but it turned out she had had an infection as a child and was unable to walk without being bent over after that. An old woman told me, after a person died they can’t feel any pain. When Alaralak’s mother died, they laid her on her back and as they straightened out her body you could hear the tendons ripping.

Ilisapi: Before I was married my mother-in-law got an infection and was unable to straighten up anymore as well.

What did you mean by nuqaqtut?

Tipuula: When the muscles are no longer able to straighten out, they are said to be nuqaqtut.

Ilisapi: When my mother-in-law lay flat on her stomach, her leg remained bent upwards and her husband would press it down until it became too painful. He continued to do this every evening, until eventually she was able to straighten it herself. At first when he let go, it would tighten up again sometimes it hurt and sometimes it did not. It was just a bit shorter and a bit bent afterwards. She could walk much better after her husband exercised her leg.

When she had her legs extended, she would press down on her knee. When she let go, it would tighten up again. That is the type of thing they used to do before there were doctors.

Tipuula: When my mother-in-law died there was just the family to bury her. I dressed her body and her son made her a coffin. Since there was just our family, we carried her across a river to where there were rocks to bury her. We had no choice but to let go of her.

What did you use for a coffin?

Tipuula: We used wood as it was not too long ago. Sometimes the deceased were dressed in new clothing if it was available.

Ilisapi: Because they were our loved ones, we put on new clothing.

Tipuula: Their kamiik and mittens were put on securely.
Did their clothing have to be new?

Ilisapi: If it wasn’t possible to put on new clothes, they would just put on their best clothing. When a relative of yours died you felt alone, even though you were not. That is how it used to be back then.

Tipuula: Tirisi’s mother was all alone when her husband died.

Did they say prayers for a person after they died?

Tipuula: No, we did not know we were supposed to do that back then. This is a fairly recent practice. I am asked to pray for those who are dying these days, but before it was not like that. Tirisi’s father crawled out of the tent and tried to head down to the coast. He had to turn back. When he returned he lay down where there was no bedding, faced the wall and died. His wife tried to remain with him contrary to his wishes, but the dogs started howling so she decided to follow his advice, even though she did not want to leave him behind. She cut their tent in half and wrapped her husband in part of it.

Ilisapi: He made sure he was already dressed so his wife would not have to dress him.

Tipuula: He was even wearing his mittens.

Was he just waiting to die?

Tipuula: Yes. He had given up struggling against his sickness.

Ilisapi: Did she just wrap him up and leave him there without covering him with rocks?

Tipuula: She put rocks around the body.

Ilisapi: She probably did not even cry. Those who are going through extreme hardship are unable to cry.

Pittailiniit, ritual prohibitions; and angakkuuniq, shamanism

Our ancestors had their own ways to treat a person who was really ill.

Tipuula: Back then, there were pittailiniit and the angakkuuniq would take care of the sick. My grandmother Nattiq helped take care of sick people, even though she was not supposed to because of a pittailiniit. She would remove the bottom part on the sleeves of her amauti before she dealt with anyone she wasn’t supposed to, so nothing ever
happened to her for breaking the *pittailiniq*. She helped those who had nobody else to help them. There were some people that nobody wanted to help because they were *tiringnaqtuq*. There was a *pittailiniq* attached to them, so others were afraid to deal with them. My grandmother did not let fear stop her from assisting those who needed help. There were some individuals that one was not allowed to approach or help but she assisted them anyway. She would remove the bottom of her sleeves prior to helping them, which allowed her to be untouched by the consequences. It was said that anyone who helped those who were *tiringnaqtuq*, would not have very long to live. She helped people like that anyway. She would say, “If I am to have a short life, then so be it.” She would go ahead and help these people anyway.

If I broke a *pittailiniq*, would Nattiq have come to help me?

**Tipuula:** If you were sick and unable to take care of yourself, and you had no one else to help you, she would have come. She would remove the bottom of her sleeves first as she was not supposed to deal with those who were sick because they had broken a *pittailiniq*. This was before they became Christians. They were following what they believed in back then.

My grandmother did not die from helping those who had broken a *pittailiniq*, even though it was a risk for her to do so. She eventually passed away when it was her time to go.

**Tirisi:** She removed the *pittailiniq* from herself by taking off the bottom of her sleeves.

**Ilisapi:** Back then when babies were born, they would predict the child’s future. They would endow the child with certain characteristics, and protection from those who would cause the child harm. We don’t do this anymore today.

What do you mean by *piggusiqtaujuq*?

**Ilisapi:** This was when we would endow a child with certain characteristics through speaking to him. For example, when some babies are baptized it seems they gain protection. They become a member of the Christian faith. Back then, although they weren’t using Christianity they would endow a child with certain characteristics and protection.

What exactly did they say to the child?

**Ilisapi:** They used to say different things. For example, they would say they wanted the child to be a good hunter, and to be able to endure hardships. There was one baby who was told that he would outlive all his relatives and that came true. Qannguq is still
around, even though all his relatives have passed away. There were different predictions made for each child. The grandparents were the ones who did this most often.

Sometimes I think that we should start doing this again. For example, saying a child will become a fast learner or that a child will turn anger into laughter or whatever.

The predictions that were made were all good-natured. There was one child that was tuigisaqtaijuq. Men used to punch each other on their shoulders until one gave up. They would try to outdo each other. One man would get sore sooner than the other. Children that were tuigisaqtaijuq had stronger shoulders because a caterpillar was put on their shoulder at birth so that they would excel in this game when they got older. Even if they did not appear strong physically, they could outdo those who were stronger than they were. Their challengers would give up before they got sore. This person didn’t know he had been endowed with this quality at birth, until someone told him that the reason he would win these games was because he was tuigisaqtaijuq.

Do miqquligiat, caterpillars, suck blood?
Ilisapi: I don’t think they do anything, but some people believe if a caterpillar was placed on a baby’s shoulder, he would grow up to have strong shoulders.

We have heard that angakkuit used to kill dogs when there were too many sick people in the camp. Have you ever heard that?
Ilisapi: I have never heard that. I have heard that when dogs were dying from distemper, that people were relieved that it was the dogs that were sick and not them. I have never heard of dogs being slaughtered. I have heard that if a child was attacked by dogs and was seriously injured but still alive, the dogs were not supposed to be killed. They had to wait for the child to recover and only then could the dogs be destroyed so they wouldn’t attack again.

Tipuula: I have heard exactly the same thing. People were relieved when it was the dogs that died instead of them. It was said that if it wasn’t the dogs that were sick it would have been humans instead, so they were relieved. It was better if the dogs were dying instead of people.

It has also been said that if the dogs attacked a person, the owner should not beat or kill his dogs, or the person that was attacked would die. The dogs were not to be killed until the person recovered.

Tirisi: That happened with my daughter. It was only after she recovered, that the dogs were shot and killed.

Tipuula: That is the way it is supposed to be.
What happened if the person that was attacked died?

**Tipuula:** The dogs would be killed.

**Ilisapi:** Otherwise, they might attack another person.

**Tipuula:** Even if the owner or a relative of the owner felt badly, they should not do anything to the dogs behind everybody’s back. Kupaaq from Mittimatalik was attacked, and the owner felt really badly about it. He was told not to beat or kill his dogs so that the person that had been attacked would recover. He used a knife handle to hit the dogs on the muzzle until they bled. He did not realize it at the time, but because he had done that Kupaaq’s stitches broke open.

Someone went to ask the owner if he had beaten his dogs and he said that he had. He was advised not to do anything more to the dogs for the time being, even if he felt angry with them. He only killed his dogs after the person who had been attacked had fully recovered. If an owner had to destroy all his dogs, he would be given puppies to replace them. That is how dogs were dealt with when they attacked someone.

**What do you mean by kiluarijuq?**

**Tipuula:** It is when a wound breaks open while it is healing. When this owner attacked his dogs, Kupaaq’s stitches broke open.

**Tirisi:** This also happened to someone whose head I stitched up.

**Ilisapi:** Had this person been attacked by a dog?

**Tirisi:** After we left to go find help, the owner started to throw rocks at his dogs, even though he had been advised not to harm them. The wounds were healing but then they opened up again.

**Tipuula:** Although nobody wants their dogs to attack anyone, you should know how to deal with the situation if it occurs.

**Tirisi:** That is the way this type of situation has always been dealt with.

*Now that there are qallunaat around, when a person has been attacked, the nurses report this to the R.C.M.P. and the dog is destroyed right away.*

**Tipuula:** The R.C.M.P. have now been informed about how these situations were dealt with in the past.
Ilisapi: There was a young girl in Mittimalik who was mauled and killed by the minister’s dogs. Back then, the minister, the R.C.M.P., and the H.B.C. had their own dogteams. The girl was saved from the dogs right away, but she was no longer breathing.

Tipuula: Had her windpipe been severed?

Ilisapi: Yes. Even though the minister’s son killed the dog right away, it didn’t matter because the girl was already dead. The ways of the qallunaat are very different from ours. We follow what has been passed down to us.

**Have you ever heard of people wearing aarnguat, amulets?**

Tipuula: I have heard that people used to wear aarnguat. They were not just used as mere decoration but as something to empower them.

Ilisapi: My father had an aarnguaq made out of a rabbit foot. It could be made from any part of an animal such as a rabbit foot hung on the clothing. The purpose of an aarnguaq was to help the person live a long life. After we became Christian, I realized I had had an aarnguaq myself. That too was a practice we had to discontinue. We found out how powerless they really were. I think if we have information about these things we should talk about them.

If we follow God faithfully we cannot mix good with evil. Some things that we followed in the past were not true. We realize this now from reading the Bible. Today some people claim to be Christian and yet they do not refrain from doing bad things. There were different types of angakkuit in the past, those who told lies and those who were very committed to helping others. That type of angakkuq was looked up to and the people relied on them. The other type that lied were relied upon too but they weren’t trusted as much.

Tipuula: Only people who were honest could be angakkuit. If a person wanted to become an angakkuq, his values were examined. If he had a bad temper, or could not keep a confidence he was not allowed to become an angakkuq. Only a good person who was honest and patient was permitted to become an angakkuq.

**Could a woman become an angakkuq too?**

Ilisapi: If she wanted to, she could.
Tipuula: If she said she wanted to be an angakkuq, her request would be considered.

Ilisapi: One of the pittailiniq was not to eat raw meat. If a person followed this pittailiniq from the time they were young and was a good person then they could become an angakkuq.

Tipuula: Those that wanted to become angakkuit could not have a short temper. They had to be patient even if someone was angry at them. They could not take revenge against another person. A person like that would try and help someone else in a time of need. They would not seek revenge right away if someone did something against them. Even if harsh words were said to them, they should not have bad feelings towards that person. That is the type of person that would make a good angakkuq. That is what I have heard.

Do you know if children became angakkuit as well?

Ilisapi: The elders would observe children to see which ones had the ability to become angakkuit. Once they were old enough, they became angakkuit, even though they didn’t go by age back then.

Did it depend on wisdom?

Ilisapi: Yes. It was based on what they knew. It was almost like a religion in itself. I believe what we are telling you is true. Angakkuit did not have a spiritual guide but they had powers.

Did the angakkuit exist before they knew about God?

Tipuula: Very much so.

I guess that was when Satan had more control.

Tipuula: It has been said that God helped them because he loved them, even if they were angakkuit. Even though they did not rely on God, he still helped them.

Ilisapi: They were aware that there was a higher power than themselves. They knew that we were created by someone and they sought help by creating pittailiniq. They would look for different ways to help. They would think: “Maybe we should do this and refrain from doing that.” That is how the pittailiniq were created. They were also aware that we each have a tarniq, a soul.
We heard that people used to believe that you needed a tarniq in order to live. We have also heard when a tarniq was removed the angakkuq would go and try and retrieve it.

Tipuula: It is impossible for a person to live once their tarniq has been removed.

Ilisapi: I have heard that the angakkuit could see other people’s tarniit as bubbles. If the angakkuq became angry, he would get even.

What did he do?

Ilisapi: He would itinniaqpauk, pretend that he was paddling and would push the bubbles aside. These bubbles could not be seen by ordinary people. If he pushed the bubble aside the person would live, but if he burst it, the person would die. That is what they would do. When an angakkuq did this, people considered that he had removed the tarniq. Angakkuit that were quick-tempered and were powerful just wanted to kill people.

Tipuula: They would murder people.

Ilisapi: They would also use their tuurngait, their helping spirits, to attack animals. Once the tuurngait had done this they wanted to do it over and over again. My in-law’s father had a tuurngaq that was like that. When he was out caribou hunting, one got away and he told his tuurngaq to go and get it. He did not just use this tuurngaq against animals, he used it against humans. Even if there are no longer angakkuit today, there are still two forces of power, one evil and one good. The power of evil is still alive today in people.

We used to hear that there were still angakkuit in Pangniqtuuq.

Ilisapi: Yes, that is a possibility.

When I was a child, other children used to tell me that my father was an angakkuq and I used to get angry. But if someone said that to me today, I would be quite proud.

Tipuula: Some people were good angakkuit. Today, you might say, “I wish that person might pray for me. There could be some change if he prayed for me.” Sometimes when one person prays for you you feel better and yet if another person prays for you you feel
worse. Even today there can be good angakkuit. You had to give a gift to the angakkuit if you wanted them to help you. I do not really have very much information. I know this only from what I have heard. I have never seen this practised, so I might be giving the wrong information.

We are even less informed then you are.

Ilisapi: We know that you aren’t going to follow shamanism but you should be informed about it.

Tipuula: When I was born, my mother was sweating and people saw that as a bad sign. Do you know what kiangiqtuq means? It is sweating so much that you dehydrate really quickly. When I was born, my mother was very dehydrated. Because of this they decided to convert to Christianity.

They gave their lives to God, and turned away from Satan. They turned away from shamanism. When I was born, my mother was at the brink of death. That was why they repented and gave themselves to God.

Ilisapi: It was not as if they were following Satan. They were searching for a means of control.

Do you think that it was because your mother converted, and recovered that you are very strong today?

Tipuula: Yes. She recovered and they started to believe in God. She almost died when I was born. They did not want her to die so they gave themselves to God. It was quite a long time ago that they turned themselves over to God. I am sure they did not forget their way of life immediately, but that was the beginning of their new life.

That was certainly a long time ago for us.

Ilisapi: I think it took longer for the people in Mittimatalik to convert to Christianity. I was born in the Kivalliq area. The people around Naujaat, Igluligaarjuk and Arviligjuaq continued to practise shamanism for an even longer time. The people around Pangniquq were the first ones to convert to Christianity.

Tipuula: Yes, they gave themselves to God a long time ago.

Ilisapi: They were the ones who introduced Christianity to our community.
Was it Uqammak [Rev. James Peck] who introduced them to Christianity?

Ilisapi: He baptized them. The people in our community learned about Christianity from other Inuit, not from qallunaat.

Dreams

I want to ask if some dreams have special meaning. I dreamed of my great-grandfather shortly after he died. This was when I only had one child. Actually, I had had another one, but he was adopted out. I was told by an elder that we shouldn’t name a child after someone after they become old enough to sing. Have you ever heard that?

Tipuula: I have never heard of that so I cannot answer. People often dream. I believe if the mother dreams of a dead person, that person wants the baby to be named after him. When a dead person was asking for water in the dreams of a mother-to-be, it was seen as a sign that the baby must be named after him. So when the baby was born, he was named after the deceased. It seems to make sense in a way.

Ilisapi: We have slightly different traditions depending on which family we are from. In our family, it was uncommon for a baby to be named after someone who had just died. We can name a baby after a dead person but we cannot bring the person back through the baby. They do not have the same tarniq, soul. They are different people. Our grandmother, even though she was an elder, did not really want us to name our babies after someone who had just died and who was not close to us. Our children were named after our own relatives but rarely after those outside of the family. I am not saying that the way we do things is better. We just have a slightly different tradition.

Tipuula: It seemed to me that my child returned to me in my dreams. I lost a child who was about nine months old. I dreamed about holding and hugging him. He was wearing clothing that was all white that was different from the clothing we wear. I dreamed about this baby who was quite big and chubby while we were still living the traditional way. I dreamed that I was kissing him on his cheek. I was told from above that the child would return in the near future and that I should expect this. I was told the child was concerned that I was worrying about him. Shortly after this I became pregnant. Some dreams have a meaning. They happen every few years or so. I have never had a dream like that again. I was told that he was in the kingdom of God and after that, I felt healed.

Ilisapi: Long before Christianity arrived in Akukittuni [Greenland], two children were sliding outside. While they were sliding the ice broke and the children fell into the
water. This happened when everyone else was indoors. When the people went out they were unable to reach them. The two children who drowned were cousins. Their relatives were really crying. The grandmother of the children, who was very traditional, told her son and daughter that they should not think about the children anymore. She said that she had heard a voice saying, “Stop crying,” and that the children were in a very happy place now. She did not see anything, but she heard this voice. I read that in a book. I think that is true. Here these people had never heard about God and yet the grandmother claimed she had heard a voice.

**Aqtuqsinniq, paralyzing nightmares**

*How can a person who is uqumangiqtuq, experiencing a paralyzing nightmare, be helped?*

**Tipuula:** I have heard two different things. Some say to wake them up, and others say to leave them be. I wonder what others have heard?

**Ilisapi:** In our dialect we don’t use the word *uqumangiq*. We use the word *aqtuqsi* for this.

*Ducks aqtuq, freeze. I wonder if the word aqtuqsi is derived from this?*

**Tipuula:** No. The body becomes *aqtuqsiq*.

**Ilisapi:** The person is aware but probably the body is asleep.

**Tirisi:** It is probably because we are asleep that we cannot move.

**Tipuula to Ilisapi:** Yet we recognize our surroundings. What have you heard? Should you wake up these people or not?

**Ilisapi:** I haven’t heard. I have only heard about when a person is *aqtuqsiq*. I had an *aqtuqsiq* and nobody woke me up. I do not think one needs help if it is not too severe. My mind was awake and yet my body could not move. There was a bear coming right at me. It was really scary, as if I was awake.

*Were you told to move your toes when you experienced this?*

**Ilisapi:** Yes. Even the toes feel heavy. I attempted to move my toes and I almost woke up. Another time I was nursing a child that was not my own, even though I had my own
children. In my dream the child I was nursing became heavier and heavier. All of a sudden I felt scared and threw him up in the air. I wondered if that meant that someone was going to die. Why were we not supposed to wake a person up?

**Tipuula:** There are two types of uqumangirlq and aqtuqsiaq. With the first type, if a person is dreaming about having sex with a non-human that abused him/her this might be a repressed memory that is resurfacing so they shouldn’t be woken up. Some of them block the abuse and it comes back in dreams. Some of them remember those who have traumatized them in their nightmares. They haven’t talked about it and have tried to forget about it. A person like this should not be awakened so they can remember on their own in their dreams.

With the second type, you also shouldn’t wake them up. The person might be trying to speak or be trembling. You have to let the person wake up on their own. They have to remember the nightmare in full in order to let it go, so it won’t cause them to become ill. If one kept a secret, this could cause them to become ill.

**Could you tell if a person was having an ordinary nightmare or something more serious?**

**Ilisapi:** I guess the person would be mumbling a lot.

**When you are aqtuqsijuq, it is impossible to say anything. Is that one way you could tell?**

**Tipuula:** A person who is aqtuqsijuq and someone who is having a nightmare because of a repressed memory are completely different. Sometimes, if a person is awakened, they regret that because they are not able to remember the nightmare. It is like they had an illness that could have been released if the person had not been awakened.

**Were you advised to put a Bible under your pillow?**

**Tipuula:** Yes, when we were going through this, we were advised to do that.

**In my region I have heard that if you put an ulu, a knife, or an ipiksaut, a sharpener, under your pillow, it would stop you from having nightmares. I guess they are used as protection.**

**Tipuula:** I have never heard of putting other things under a pillow, just Bibles.
The reason why I asked this question is because of someone who found out they had experienced uqumangirniq after being told about it afterwards. They wanted to know why the other person hadn't helped them.

Ilisapi: You cannot tell if someone is having an aqtuqsiq, unless you are sleeping with the person and he starts mumbling.

I have heard that if a person is constantly uqumangisuuq it is because there is an evil force in their house.

Ilisapi: That is a possibility. An invisible force has power too. We have to tell it to leave.

Tirisi: It is also alright to have the house exorcised.

When one is living in fear, it is not good for the body or the mind. If one has the same thoughts over and over, or regrets something, could this be the cause of uqumangiq?

Ilisapi: That could be the case.

That happened to me because I was experiencing so much grief and remorse after someone died. I experienced uqumangiq every night. This death was constantly on my mind. It was only when I started talking about my nightmare, it stopped.

Tipuula: If you know what is bothering you, you should talk about it. We do not always know the reason.

Ilisapi: If we are constantly thinking about a close deceased relative, we can let our grief get the better of us. It can even affect our sleep. Even if we feel a lot of grief, we have to tell ourselves that that is in the past and his life is finished. Some people can make themselves sick or age prematurely from grieving too much over a deceased relative. Look at us for example, we have no parents, no spouses and we have lost children. We are surviving, even without our loved ones. You can tell yourself you can do that too. We are all going to die. No matter what, the deceased person will not be coming back. You have to tell yourself that.

Tipuula: Yes. Grief does not have to carry on forever. It is hard to forget the year a certain thing happened.
Ilisapi: You try not to remember but that is impossible.

*I really blamed myself for what happened, to the point where I was making myself seriously ill.*

Ilisapi: We tend to blame ourselves when a person dies from sickness. We tend to say if only I had done this, or if only I had done that.

**Beliefs**

*I have heard that if you constantly think about a deceased person, their spirit cannot rest?*

Ilisapi: I haven’t heard that. We have no idea where the tarniq the soul goes. I think it is bad for your health to think like that.

*I have heard that if you grieve too much after somebody dies, the tarniq comes back to earth. Have you heard that too?*

Tipuula: I have heard, if we lose a blood relative, we have to make sure our hair isn’t tangled for three days.

Ilisapi: We shouldn’t just let ourselves deteriorate.

Tipuula: It is a real shock when we lose a blood relative. It is said that we have to comb our hair to make sure it is not tangled. This has something to do with the tarniq.

**Some say if we grieve too much that the deceased will not go forward to their resting place.**

Tipuula: A person’s tarniq doesn’t die. It is just the body that dies. For that reason, we have to go on and try and live a good life. After some time has passed, we have to go on living. When the earth comes to an end, we will see our loved ones again. We have known about this, even before Christianity arrived.

*My baby died at ten months of age before he was baptized. He spent his entire life in the hospital. I was told that he would not be able to enter the kingdom of God because he was not baptized.*

Ilisapi: The person who told you this gave you the wrong information. We have heard that all children are without sin.
Tipuula: If a child has not committed any sins, it is said he will enter the kingdom of God.

Ilisapi: Anybody can say anything! Saying that a person will not go to the kingdom of God is just nonsense!

Tipuula: We have no control over where our tarniit end up.

Ilisapi: We do not have control over which tarniit will be allowed to enter the kingdom of God. That is up to our Creator. We have no right to say that individuals who commit suicide go to Hell. That is not for us to decide.

Tirisi: Definitely. We do not know.

Tipuula: I have heard from a former minister that some people recover from sickness, if they are prayed for before their tarniq has left them. Some do not recover even when they are prayed for, because their tarniq has left them while they are alive. That is the reason prayer does not revive them. That is what I have heard.

When the dead are buried, which way do they have to face?

Tipuula: They should face outwards, towards the day [sun].

Did you follow that in the old days?

Tipuula: People have always done that.

Ilisapi: In our community, we are running out of space in the cemetery. There are two graves at Qilalukkut facing the wrong direction because of the terrain there. Those two people had requested to be buried there. It does not really matter to me which way they face. People drown or die in a fire who do not face any particular direction. Whenever possible though, we should follow the custom.

Why do they have to face that direction?

Ilisapi: This is probably a man-made rule. We are not told anywhere in the Bible that the dead have to face a certain direction or it would be impossible for them to be with God.

We are connected to the earth. It has been said that the weather tends to turn bad when someone is about to die. Do you think that is true?
Ilisapi: I know myself that after someone dies, the weather either becomes very calm or it gets stormy. I do not know why. It may be because of the death, although people who die have no control over the weather.

Tipuula: There was this one old man who said that he really liked the spring. He said it would rain slightly when he died and that is exactly what happened. He liked that kind of weather. He said that when his body was laid to rest that it would be a nice day with a light rain.

When someone arrived and the weather turned bad, did they say it was because the person who arrived was not a nice person?
Ilisapi: That was meant as a joke.

Tipuula: People back then used to joke around too. They were not always serious.

Ilisapi: They used to say not to go out without a coat or the weather would turn bad.

Tipuula: If that person is silaluktuaq, someone with the propensity to make the weather bad, then it would turn bad.

People also said if a person was wearing their underwear inside out, they had to stick out their bum. We were also told not to go out of an iglu backwards.
Ilisapi: In the past, women who were pregnant really had to follow things like this. If a pregnant woman's husband or another person was on their way in to the camp, the pregnant woman had to stick out her bum towards the people who were arriving.

Did she have to do this on the top of a hill?
Ilisapi: Yes, she did. Women had to do this embarrassing thing so that they would have an easy delivery when they went into labour.

Old sayings
I heard from an elder in Kuujjuaraapik that if you want to catch a lot of fish, you should kiss somebody's big toe. Have you ever heard this saying?
Ilisapi: I heard that for the first time in a song. It is sung by people from Kinngait. This song is not from our community but I can sing it.
I think people sing that song when there are a lot of northern lights out; I forget the beginning.

The beginning starts with, ‘Unikkaatuannguakainnalaurniarama.’

Unikkaatuannguakainnalaurniarama unikkausituqarnik, piusituqavinirnik
I’m going to pretend to unikkaaqtaaq about old sayings, about the old ways.

qilaluqattalaraarvit amaaqtaaqattarit angutaugularlutit
Carry other people’s babies even though you are a boy, in order to have success whale hunting.

aqsaarlujualuitillugu nasiangenatuartullit niaquiqtaugajaqtutit
If you are out without your hood on and the Northern Lights are out your head will be removed.

siutaijaqujaunnginirmut taimailijauvuq ukiuraaluummat
They were told this because they didn’t want them to suffer cold and because it was winter time.

kunigiaqasuungulaurivut iqalutsugumamut isigagijaujunik
They had to kiss someone’s foot to have success in fishing.

That is how it goes but I do not know the rest. It is suggesting that if you kiss someone’s toe you will catch fish. Even if we have no desire to kiss a person’s toe, it was said that if you did you would catch fish.

I heard some people from Kinngait sing it at a teachers’ conference. I learned it from them. I have not sung it for a long time so I have forgotten some of the words. I have never known of anyone from our area kissing a person’s toe.

At one place where we go fishing, we are advised to leave an offering at the grave of a man who burst after eating fish, so that we can catch fish. When we go fishing there, we have to leave something at his grave. It is not where people from Pangniqtuuq go fishing. Do you think that people did this long ago?

Ilisapi: If you want to believe this, you can but this is just a maligangguaruluk, not a rule you really have to follow.
It was said that he burst because he considered the fish too small and was punished for saying so. Were you told not to say fish were too small?

Ilisapi: We were told never to say that about any type of food. We were told to be thankful. If a child was visiting when we were eating, he would be given a bite even if it was small, even if it was all we had. Even if it was palaugaq, or caribou fat, we would give him a mouthful like candy.

We grew up hearing that we should not eat while someone was watching, without offering them some.

Ilisapi: We were supposed to share. We were told there was always going to be more. Also, we were told not to say that something we were given was not enough, even if it was money.

Tipuula: A child and a very elderly person are both to be treated the same way. We have to give each a piece. An elderly person will not ask for something even if he wants it, so we have to offer it to him. It is not like you don’t give him any just because he did not ask.

Ilisapi: We should also not scold children who have wet their bed or their pants. They are unable to control their bladders, so we were advised just to clean things up without getting angry.

We tend to hurt children’s feelings if we do that.

Ilisapi: Yes, even now we have to be aware of that. Some babies are in wet diapers for a long time because the mother doesn’t feel like changing them.

Tipuula: It is exactly the same with the elderly. Some cannot control their bladders anymore because they are so old. You shouldn’t tell them that they smell awful. Elders are very thankful for any help they get.

Ilisapi: We know that an elderly person can have a very strong stench if they are urinating and defecating in their pants, but you shouldn’t say that they smell awful.

We have been told never to leave babies alone or they might be nagliktaujuq, taken away by unseen beings. Have you ever heard of that?

Ilisapi: I guess if we abuse them then that is possible. If a baby has not been abused, then it is okay to leave them alone for short periods. I often left my babies when they were asleep, as we were always busy. I made sure I was within ear shot. We would do
a chore or fetch water while our babies were not on our backs. I often left my babies alone, but they were close enough so that I would hear them if they were crying. I would not go far and leave them behind though. I guess nothing would happen if you were not abusive towards them.

Tipuula: I have heard that we should not make children do things that they are not old enough to do.

Ilisapi: I guess one might return to a dead child. It is okay to leave them if you don’t abuse them. Someone from Kangiqsuaapik couldn’t believe I left my children behind! This woman was not shy to speak her mind. I heard from her that a child could be taken away by unseen beings. I never heard that from my parents. I told her that if that were to happen, how nice it would be not to have to have a baby to carry on my back!

When elders get sick we are advised to go and visit them. My mother used to tell me to visit sick people so that I would know how to deal with her when she became sick but I never did that. I did not know what to do when she became ill. It was quite hard not knowing what to do. Is this how people would learn to care for the sick?

Ilisapi: We were advised to go to places where it was not pleasant. We cannot always be in a happy place. Poor people’s houses were really stinky. The ones who had no fathers, who lived on handouts, would be like that. We would be advised to visit these families. Our dwelling was better than most. We had an elder named Karlak in our camp who had toes missing from having frozen his feet. He also had a daughter who had a bad arm.

Tipuula: His daughter was like that from birth.

Ilisapi: His toes were missing from having frozen his feet. I would go to visit them. I was not ashamed to be with them. I used to pick their lice. Poor people had more lice. My sister often told my parents that I picked their lice. Although my parents did not scold me very much, they told me not to pick their kumait, lice. They told me I could continue bringing them food whenever I felt like it. I would ask first if I could take something over to their place, like tea, sugar or palaugaq. Because my parents did not always have things to give away, sometimes I was scolded for doing this. I often gave them oil as their place was colder than our place. This was very helpful later in my life, even though I did not think of the future back then. I often felt protective towards those who were less fortunate than I was. Although we weren’t constantly told to help others, we were reminded about it once in a while.

Perspectives on Traditional Health
Tipuula: When we were growing up we were surrounded by love.

Ilisapi: People should be more willing to help out when they can, even if they are not going to be paid.

*We have so many excuses today for not helping others.*

Tipuula: It is like that today because we have so much to do. The day is too short to try and get everything done.

*I was told to try and help someone but I was scared of the person. It was embarrassing.*

Ilisapi: You will get more experience as you grow older. You will be able to do more of the things that have been asked of you.

*There was a person with mental problems in our community and I never wanted her to come to my house. I was scared of her.*

Ilisapi: Why? Did she try to come into your house?

Yes. She kept asking to come over. I did not want her to know where we lived.

Ilisapi: Well, you should not feel too bad as your place was not the only place that she could go. If your place was the only one available and you didn’t let her in, that would be different. I do not like intoxicated people coming to my house. Once I heard some people talking outside when I was asleep, so I got up and looked through the window. I saw some people walking and they looked drunk, so I went to the door right away to lock up. Before I locked the door, I looked outside to see if they had passed by. There was a man right there, so I did not lock the door and I asked him why he was there. He said he was cold, so I told him to go home. He said he had no place to go and because he was not dressed warmly I told him he could warm up in the porch. I did not even let him in. He said he would lock up once he warmed up. I could not go back to sleep because I was so sorry that I did not even let him in to warm up. When I saw him after that, I told him I was sorry that I did not let him in. I would not have been sorry at all if he had not been an orphan. Sometimes, we do not do what we should.

Tipuula: Sometimes we do things we don’t mean to.
Ilisapi: You will learn to do things as you grow older. As you gain more experience, you will be able to voice your knowledge. Even if you don’t have professional credentials, you have abilities. I am sure you are here because you want to learn. There are some people who don’t pursue their education because they are unwilling to listen and don’t want to learn things. You are here because you want to learn.

Tirisì: Even if you forget something, you will eventually remember it later.

Tipuula: You forget things if you are not dealing with something regularly. Then when the time comes, you remember what you had forgotten. That is the way it is.

Ilisapi: Yes, one day you will teach others the things you have learned.

Have you ever heard that when people became sick, they thought it was because the land was warm, so they moved to a new location?

Tipuula: Yes. We lived at the same winter camp for about three years. Then we would have to move to another location so the land we were living on would cool off.

Did the land become warm because of sickness?

Tipuula: I do not know what the reason was. I guess, when there was too much sickness occurring we would move to another location. After having waited for the camp to cool down for a while, they would go back. They would return some time later, but it would be left for a while so it could cool off.

Ilisapi: The land did not actually get hot.

Tipuula: The land didn’t get hot at all. If there was a lot of sickness occurring, they thought this was from living in the same place for too long. They would move to another location for a while and would return later. I wonder how they knew about this.

Ilisapi: I guess they knew it was best to move for a while, while the land cleansed itself.

Premonitions

When people felt twitches or their ears were ringing, did they expect something to happen?

Tipuula: The term for this is niriujaatuq. It means you are expecting something to happen, such as expecting someone to arrive.
Ilisapi: I know that someone is going to catch an animal when I hear ringing in my ears. For someone else, hearing a ringing in their ears might signify that they were about to receive good news. When one heard a crackling in the ear, this was said to be sign that it would be windy. My parents didn’t believe this, but that is what I have heard. If your eye was twitching, it was a sign that you would see someone that you didn’t normally see. When someone's eye twitches because they are going to see someone, this is called takusiut. Sajuktuq means twitching. If your flesh was twitching, it was said to be a bad sign if you were a person who received premonitions in that way. That was called a tuqusiut and it meant that someone would be dying.

That happens to my younger sister.

Ilisapi: When someone received a sign, it would happen without there seeming to be any reason for it.

If your hand twitched, did that signify something?

Ilisapi: It could signify something if that was how the person received a sign. We all have twitches, but a twitching eye is not necessarily a takusiut. My parents did not really believe in that and yet my mother often said if her eye twitched, it was because she would see someone she didn’t see everyday. It didn’t always happen. When our ears ring and when we know something is going to happen we tell people that something good will occur. Some people would think they had had a premonition, when it was just ordinary ringing in their ears.

My mother-in-law would have dreams and visions after sitting still for awhile. She really believed in God. When our men were out hunting, sometimes they would be gone for a long time. We lived far from where there were qallunaat. One day when I woke up I felt the men would be arriving and I asked my mother-in-law if she had had a dream. Although I knew that the missionaries didn’t like us believing in these things, I had become used to her having dreams that came to pass, so when she said she hadn’t had a dream about them, I became depressed. She said they would arrive home eventually, even though she hadn’t dreamed about them. I was feeling lonely because there were so few people in our camp. My mother-in-law lay down for a while. Then she sat up, and told one of my children that she thought the men were going to be coming home soon. I asked her why she had said this. She said she didn’t know if she had just been lying there or if she had been dreaming.

I knew they would not be arriving till late evening. I dried my kamiik because I was going to go and get some meat from the cache. I was feeling energetic because I knew the men would be coming home soon. That night they arrived shortly after we had gone to sleep. My mother-in-law told about the dream she had had. She said that in her dream
she was in a boat in foggy weather. There was something that appeared to be ice around her and she was facing in the direction of our camp. Whenever she had that dream it would mean that the men would arrive soon. The boat would be facing our camp from whatever direction the men were located. She would have this dream and it would come true. It didn’t happen every single time but it happened a lot. Then it stopped. Eventually her dreams stopped being precise. When she said the men would be arriving at a certain time this wasn’t so. My mother-in-law did not want to believe in this as she thought it was related to shamanism.

*Were there also people who could tell there was bad weather coming because their bodies were in pain?*

**Ilisapi:** The ones who had chronic illnesses could feel if there was bad weather coming.

**Tipuula:** Those with chronic conditions could tell. For example, if someone had a chronic pain in their arm, when the weather was going to turn bad their pain worsened.

*People who had broken bones could feel changes in the weather too.*

**Ilisapi:** They feel the pain more when the weather is going to turn bad.

**Tipuula:** Those who have been extremely ill are also able to feel changes in the weather.

*Did those who had physical or mental disabilities get worse during the full moon?*

**Ilisapi:** Yes. People believe that they can feel the change.

**Tipuula:** I am going to add something more about *sajinniaq*, twitching. The lower eyelid is called *quvvik*.

**Ilisapi:** The *quvvik* area is not wet.

**Tipuula:** Yes. We used to hear of people dreading having a twitch in that area, as it was a sign that they would hear that someone had died. They would say, “Oh no, I had a twitch under my eye, I will be hearing bad news.” We would then expect someone to arrive and tell us that somebody had died in another camp.
I do not like dreaming about bears or about teeth.

Ilisapi: When one dreams of losing teeth, then it is a sign that a relative has died. When I dreamed that I lost a tooth, I was afraid that a relative of mine had died. I didn’t tell anyone about the dream. Later, I heard that one of my relatives had died. I had no control over this. Later on, I had other dreams of losing teeth but nobody died. Sometimes, when one dreams of losing teeth, it is not a sign that someone will die. I have a surgical scar but it never itches when there is bad weather.

Tipuula: It has been said that if a person’s eye is constantly twitching, the person may have Bell’s Palsy.

Ilisapi: When one side of the face is sagging they are said to be ijittuaq. Some lose their muscle control, even though it may come back later.

If someone lost their muscle control was there anything that could be done to help them?

Tipuula: The muscle control eventually comes back on its own. You can’t really do anything about it. When whatever is causing it has passed, the muscle control returns.

Ilisapi: Some people get their muscle control back and some do not.

If the mouth is twitching does it mean that someone is talking about you?

Tipuula: That is just a saying, “When your mouth is twitching someone is talking about you.”

For me it is a sign that I will get money. It is a sign that I just made up. I use it just to joke around, just for fun.

Tipuula: Yes. These signs are not always serious.

Ilisapi: When someone had a twitch and said something was going to happen, when others had a twitch they would also think the same thing would happen to them. The ones who had signs were copied. If a baby that was not able to talk yet said uquuquq, when his father was preparing to go out hunting that would be good luck. If the child said uquuquq the hunter would catch something.

Tipuula: In baby talk uquuquq means “animal.”
Ilisapi: They would say the father would catch something, if the baby said *uqqaq*.

Someone would jokingly ask, “How many?”, if a child was nodding off to sleep. A game called najangajaq was played with them.

Ilisapi: I used to play solitaire with cards. I would say, if I won the game then the men would come home. I was always busy doing something. If I took a break, I would play cards. I guess I am really hyperactive. I would say that the men would come back, if I won the game. One of my sons would beg me to play cards to see if his father would come back if he was really down, or he missed his father.

*My father used to do that too. I used to copy him. Do you know if adolescents were said to be adults once they finished growing?*

Tipuula: Yes. The word *iniqtut* means their bodies have finished growing.

**Footnotes**

1 See the story collected by Boas in South Baffin Island of the first two Inuit ancestors Akalookjo (Aakulugjuusi) and Owirnneto (Uummaarnittuq). A chrysalis once became hungry and started sucking their blood (Boas 1901: 178-179; 1907: 483).
Part Two

Uqqurmiut Elders (South Baffin)
Aanniasiutigijauvaktuviniit, Materials Used for Healing; and Childbirth

Uses of oil

Was ringed seal, bearded seal and other marine mammal blubber and oil used for healing?

Aalasi: I will tell you all the things I have tried and I will answer what I know. My mother used to try anything. She was quite poor. They never used anything from the nurses when I was growing up. It was only when I moved here that I stopped using our traditional methods. Polar bear oil is very clear, unlike seal and walrus oil. It is the best. My mother used to use it for ear drops. She would put one or two drops in each ear. It is very good. We didn’t use just any fat from the bear. We would use the inner layer of fat from the stomach. The fat around there is really thick.

Jaikku: This is called aluqiak.

Aalasi: You would melt it over heat without boiling it. We did not measure with spoons back then. We used lids from baking powder cans to measure. One or two drops was put in each ear, not more. If the lid was full it was around a teaspoon. When we get medication from the hospital, we often have to take it every four hours. These drops were applied about every six to twelve hours. My mother would make us lay on our side even though we really wanted to be up and around. My mother tried a lot of different things. She was an alla, a Cree. My father was very knowledgeable also.

Was oil also used on cuts?

Jaikku: I know that it was used for cuts and for impetigo. The oil was removed from the blubber of an ujik, a bearded seal, and the remaining tangiq was used as a bandaid. It was considered the best for wounds and cuts. It would be applied and then removed after the oil had been absorbed.

Aalasi: The tangiq drew out any infection. It cleaned up the wound perfectly.

Jaikku: Once the tangiq dried up, it was removed. Another piece was applied if needed.
**Aalasi:** They used to keep a supply of *ugjuk* blubber for this purpose. Sometimes it had been scraped and sometimes it had been chewed.

*Would the oil be scraped off?*

**Aalasi:** Yes, the excess oil was completely removed. Even the *tangiq* was chewed to remove any excess oil.

**Jaikku:** You do not have to scrape it, as long as the extra oil is removed. You could also chew it well and spit out the oil.

*Was it also used for burns?*

**Aalasi:** Yes they used this for burns too. Two people in our camp had really bad burns. My mother got a really bad burn on her ankle from boiling oil. She used rabbit stomach to heal it. The internal organs of animals are different. Some of them are stronger than others. The stomach of a rabbit is excellent for burns. You just remove it from the rabbit and apply it directly on the burn without removing the contents of the *qisaruaq*, the stomach.

*Are the contents of the rabbit’s stomach also called nirukkarujuit?*

**Aalasi:** Yes. It was okay to apply the stomach to the burn with the contents inside. Since it should not dry up, you need to tie a rag around it to hold it in place. The *qisaruaq* sucks out any infection. I have seen this myself.

*Was bearded seal oil applied to burns?*

**Jaikku:** Yes. Bearded seal oil was the best. Ringed seal oil tended to dry up quickly.

**Aalasi:** Yes, it is the weakest because it tends to dry out the wound.

**Jaikku:** This can end up being painful because it is so dry the skin ends up cracking.

**Aalasi:** Bearded seal oil is the strongest of all the oils.

*Did you ever try polar bear oil?*

**Aalasi:** I know of polar bear oil being boiled and used for congested lungs, but not for wounds. It was used as a Vapour Rub on the shoulder area for those who had bad colds. It really brought the sweat out when used as a rub. It was good for colds.
Was oil ever taken orally as a cough medicine?

Aalasi: It was used for this. My mother used to give us one spoon of oil and this helped with a cough. You would boil the oil and swallow a spoonful. Nowadays I go to the doctor when I have a cold but if it lingers I have oil rubbed on my shoulder area. I boil the oil for this beforehand, whether it’s from a bearded seal or a ringed seal.

Jaikku: You have a lot of experience in this area.

Aalasi: Yes, I do. I keep a supply of boiled oil in a glass container in my freezer. We should keep a supply handy even today. We depend on the doctors too much. We should keep a supply handy since it is not always possible to go to the doctor. The oil in your freezer needs to be warmed up before it is applied. It is absorbed better if it is not cold.

Are you talking about boiled oil or tangiq?

Aalasi: Oil was stronger after it had been boiled.

Could any kind of blubber be used?

Aalasi: Any kind of blubber could be used but bearded seal blubber was the best. It was always the strongest.

Was polar bear fat used?

Jaikku: It was hard to get polar bear fat. A bear was rarely ever caught back then, unlike today.

Aalasi: Bearded seal oil was the most readily available.

Jaikku: Bearded seal oil was considered the best.

How often did you have to swallow the oil, every half an hour or so?

Aalasi: Back then we did not follow the clock. It was usually given at bedtime. It would be rubbed on around nine or ten in the morning, then at one, at six and at bedtime. It was also good to swallow a spoonful of the boiled oil.
Did you used to have infected skin?

Aalasi: Yes. We used to have infected skin.

Jaikku: Babies and children often had impetigo behind their ears.

Aalasi: The tangiq that had had the oil removed worked well on impetigo as well. We would put it on the infected area when the child fell asleep. It drew out the infection.

Jaikku: Rabbit fur that had had oil applied to it was very good for cleaning infected areas. It was even better than cloth because it did not stick to the infected area and it easily removed the scabs. That was what we used. We applied oil to infected areas around the eyes and on impetigo to keep infections from drying and cracking.

Did you use the oil even if it hadn’t been boiled?

Jaikku: Yes. Even if it had not been boiled we used it.

Aalasi: Some of the medications supplied by the doctors are not as good as animal oil. Some of them are really bad for infections. Sometimes, they make them worse and cause swelling. Animal oil does not cause a reaction.

During an interview with other elders I heard that whale oil tends to cause a swelling reaction. Did you ever try to use it?

Aalasi: I can’t think of an incident where someone swelled up from whale oil. It was also good to use as a rub. I do not know if it causes swelling. We have different knowledge, depending on the areas we come from. Keep this information. Don’t dismiss it. You gain knowledge from everything you hear.

Elders older than we are have more knowledge. Keep the information from both interviews and use what you feel is useful. The marrow from seagull and duck wings is also good for oiling the corners of an infected eye.

Impetigo on the head is different from impetigo on the body. Marrow works well on the head. You need to apply a fair amount. You can remove it after. My mother used marrow a lot.

There is not a lot of marrow in a bird’s wing. Did you have to collect it?

Aalasi: Yes. We tried to have a supply handy.
Jaikku: We would only use it if it was available. We did not collect it. We would use it if we happened to have some handy.

Medicinal plants
I am very eager to hear more about plants. What do quajautiiit, rock tripe, look like?
Aalasi: I think they look exactly like your hair. They are curly. You find them on rocks.

Are they similar to tingaujait, caribou moss?
Aalasi: They are not the same as caribou moss. Rock tripe is different than tingaujait. It looks curly and it seems to be stuck on the rocks.

Jaikku: You find it on solid rock. It is not in the soil.

I heard that qalupaliit are afraid of rock tripe.
Aalasi: Yes. The qalupaliit tend to stick to rock tripe. The qalupaliit were never to touch them.

Do you believe there are such things as qalupaliit?
Aalasi: There are qalupaliit. One approached our camp when we were living outside of Pangniqujuq. It would come to our camp at night. Nobody ever saw it but the dogs were so scared that they got on top of the gammaq. The people started wondering if it was a qalupaliik. When we were out clam digging, my brother-in-law saw the tail of an amauti made of mitsiq, eider duck skin. He saw the qalupaliik running very close to us. Every night we heard something saying “viivii.” Apparently it lived very close to us throughout the whole fall. There was one near our camp that year but the following year it was gone. There are actually qalupaliit.

Jaikku: I think they move from camp to camp. I have heard that they used female eider duck skins for clothing.

I have heard they put whomever they capture in their amautiiit.
Aalasi: Yes, if a qalupaliik puts a child in their amauti, you cannot see it. They can put more than one child inside. They live in the sea.

I want to tell you something I learned about plants from the late Kakkik that I tried myself. My sister’s late husband used to know about nirnait, caribou lichen, the plants.
that caribou eat. They are long and you pull them out. They tend to grow in swampy areas. I boiled them when all the people in our camp were sick. I was the only one up and about when we were living in a fishing camp. My mother had been admitted to the hospital and we were waiting for her return in August. Six of my family members were sick in bed. I boiled some caribou lichen in a pot for a long time, following my brother-in-law’s advice. He told me to stop boiling them when the water turned black. I waited for them to cool down and I gave each sick person some to drink. The next day, they were all up and about. It looked like the cough syrup in a bottle.

Were caribou lichen used for healing?

Aalasi: They were useful for medicinal purposes. The people that I gave some to were sweating so much their hair seemed like it had just been washed. I have seen myself that caribou lichen can be useful. You have to get them from a swampy area.

What do they look like?

Aalasi: They have black roots. Caribou eat them.

Did you cook them until they turned black and then give them to people as qajuq, as broth to drink?

Aalasi: Yes. You would cook the caribou lichen until the water turned black. The plants themselves were not eaten. Miqqapiat, seaweed found in brooks and creeks, were also useful. They are furry and they are green. They are nice to look at.

Jaikku: They are a nice green.

Are they slippery?

Aalasi: Yes. They are very slippery, and they are furry. The furry parts are excellent for healing an eye infection. Even a person who had such a severe eye infection that their eye was closed shut, could open their eye the next day.

Did you boil these plants too?

Aalasi: No. You took them directly from the creek and applied them to the eye still damp. I only know them as miqqapiat. I have never heard another name for them. Maybe the name is different depending on where you come from. Malitsuagait, seabeach sandwort, can be found at the edge of the sea.

Jaikku: At the edge of the water.
Aalasi: They have medicinal properties.

Do you have to boil them too?

Aalasi: You just eat them. You rinse them first, take the sand out and eat them. They can help people who are sick.

Are mamaittuqutiit the same as qijuttaat, Arctic bell heather?

Aalasi: Mamaittuqutiit is just another name for qijuttaaqait, Labrador tea. It is larger than Arctic bell heather, Labrador tea is called mamaittuqutiit in Nunavik. They are very useful. They can be used to moisten very dry hands. They have a very strong odour. That’s why they are called mamaittuqutiit.

Jaikku: I know a lot about pujualuit, puffball mushrooms. I brought some pujualuit back from Kinngait after visiting there. I put them in a pill container. When I got back here, I checked them so that I could take them over to the hospital to show them what we used for cuts. When the plant is not fully mature, the inner parts are white. I kept it in a jar after I found it. When I checked it after I returned, it had turned to liquid; maybe because I hadn’t dried it out enough before I stored it.

It turned to liquid?

Jaikku: It just turned into liquid. I haven’t tried to collect it since.

Aalasi: It was probably still good.

Jaikku: It may have been good but I just threw it away.

Aalasi: It could still have been used to help someone who was sick if there was no medical assistance available.

Was anything from the sea used for healing?

Aalasi: Kuanniit, kelp, and iquutiit, rockweed, two different types of seaweed, were some of the most requested plants. They worked really well.

Jaikku: Nuvaqqiit, jellyfish, also had medicinal properties.

Aalasi: They could be used to heal impetigo. Some of them are so big, they look like a basin. They look like pouches and are called ippiarjuujait in some dialects.
Jaikku: The big red ones were used on areas that had trouble healing. They would be squished into an ointment.

Could they be used to heal a hand rash?

Jaikku: Yes. I have heard that they are good for a hand rash. I do not know this personally; I have just heard this.

Aalasi: I used to have problems with my hands. I tried to keep it on the whole day but it did not work for me.

Jaikku: I guess it takes time. It does not work immediately. It kills the germs in the infected areas. Germs cause impetigo and the jellyfish kill germs.

Aalasi: My hands were even worse the year after I tried this. When we were out on the land again, the flesh on my hands was completely raw. I wanted to be taken back to Iqaluit because I got scared when one of my nails came off. The men did not want to go back so I started wiping my hands with fresh lemming skins and that healed my hands.

You used a lemming skin?

Aalasi: Yes. You keep the fat on the skin and apply it to the flesh. I even had gloves made out of lemming skins. That is how my hands healed.

Are all the slippery ones that look like hair called aqajait, seaweed?

Aalasi: Yes! Make sure you write that down.

Can you make jam out of kimminnait, cranberries?

Aalasi: Yes. Cranberries can be made into jam just like blackberries, and blueberries.

Jaikku: They are really sour before they ripen. Once they ripen they are excellent to eat.

What do you add to them to make jam?

Aalasi: I never made jam myself, but I know people who have.

Jaikku: I have heard that people make jam with blueberries too, but I have never tried it myself.
Were atungaujait used for band-aids or for food?

Aalasi: They were used as band-aids. They also made excellent tea.

Jaikku: I never knew they could be used for band-aids.

Aalasi: Yes, they can be used for band-aids after being soaked in warm water. They are also an excellent source of tea. I have drunk it many times. We lacked a lot of things back then so I grew up drinking them as tea. My mother taught me that on walks while we were looking for things to eat. My aunt used to talk about which plants were the best, which roots and plants were really good to eat.

Did the allait, the Cree, use plants more than Inuit did?

Aalasi: Very much so.

Jaikku: There are many more plants in Nunavik, Northern Quebec, than on Qikiqtaaluk, Baffin Island.

Are atungaujait mushrooms?

Jaikku: Very much so.

In Pangniqtuuq, atungaujait are the mushrooms we buy from the store. Are they different from pujualuit?

Aalasi: I do not know the Inuktitut word for the ones we buy in the store.

Jaikku: Before the pujualuit flatten out, they are round.

Aalasi: They have a thick stem.

Jaikku: Quarait, net veined willow, have qupirruit, worms.

Were bearded seal and ringed seal blubber the only oils used for earaches?

Aalasi: They are the only ones I know.

Were there people who were tusilattuq, people who misheard things? I heard that tusilattuq and tusaattiangittuq have different meanings.

Aalasi: There used to be people who were tusilattu. There were not very many of them.
Jaikku: *Tusaagaliit* were people who heard things.

Aalasi: People who heard things preferred to be alone.

Jaikku: They would hear invisible people speaking. They were non-humans even though they sounded human. People who were *tusaagaliit* tended to be withdrawn.

Aalasi: They started to believe what their minds created and considered this to be true.

*I have heard that people who are about to receive bad news hear ringing in their ears. Do you think this is true?*

Aalasi: That used to happen to me when I was going to hear that someone had died. My ear would start ringing. My flesh tends to twitch if I am going to hear bad news nowadays.

Jaikku: When I hear ringing in my ear, it means that the weather is going to get windy.

Aalasi: *Siirniq*, spring water, is excellent for sick people. It is often requested by elders but it is also good for others as well.

What is *siirniq*?

Jaikku: You cannot get *siirniq* from a lake. It is found at a river. It is different from plain water. It is very clear. It has a great taste.

Aalasi: That type of water is very good for a sick person. You can find it at the edge of a river.

Jaikku: When there is a full moon, the water comes up onto the ice.

Aalasi: The edges of rivers and lakes become spring water. In the summer, you can find spring water that comes from deep underground.

Jaikku: It is nice and cold.

*When we scoop up water during the spring, does it come up from underground?*
Aalasi: Yes, it comes from underground. Spring water is the best during a full moon. It seems so clear. It is good to take to elders. Even if they haven’t requested it they will really appreciate it, if some is brought to them.

I am going to go down to the river’s edge at the next full moon. When you drink from the river, do you think it is good for all parts of the body?

Aalasi: It is very good for the body. It affects the whole body. It is as if all the body toxins are being removed.

Jaikku: Fresh rain water is also very good. Fresh rain water from puddles on clean ground is very good.

Water from melted surface sea ice is also really good. It is not salty.

Aalasi: Those things you see that are stuck on the rocks, that look like teeth, have meat inside. They are called kiliugait, barnacles. You can boil them to make broth which you can use for medicinal purposes as well. You can scrape them or hammer them off the rocks and put them in a pot. After you boil them and drink the broth, you become energized. Barnacles can be useful to people who are feeling sick and for those who are constipated.

Jaikku: I never knew they had medicinal properties. I just suck on them. They taste like clams.

Aalasi: They are really tasty. You cook them the way you cook clams.

But they are not edible!

Aalasi: You can eat them. They are food too. They have some meat inside.

Jaikku: I never knew they could be eaten. I just sucked out the juice. Aggaujait, star fish, are really good to suck on after you hammer them open.

Where do you find them?

Jaikku: On the tidal flats. They look like they are shaped like a hand. They are stiff and you find them lying out in the open. When you go near them they close up and bury themselves with only their tips showing. Sometimes they make themselves stick to the ground. They are very tasty.
Aalasi: I find them creepy. They look like stars.

What type of plant was used for stomach-aches?
Aalasi: Iquutiit, rockweed, from the beach would be eaten if someone had an upset stomach.

Would you boil it in a broth?
Aalasi: No. Rockweed does not need to be boiled in a broth.

Do you boil it in plain water?
Aalasi: Yes, iquutiit, kuanniit and qiqquat, different types of seaweed, are boiled until they turn green. That was all you ate for a day if you had an upset stomach. The water that had been used to boil the seaweed would be used as a rub for the stomach afterwards.

Was there anything else you could use to treat a stomach-ache?
Aalasi: Uqaujait, young willow leaves, quarait, the net veined willow, and naqutiit, blueberry bushes were also good for treating an upset stomach. They too would be boiled until the water turned green. They were good too.

How much water did you use?
Aalasi: Not too much. You would make sure that the plants were covered.

Jaikku: You would stir them occasionally as they were cooking.

Were qunguliit, mountain sorrel, cooked too?
Aalasi: Absolutely. The juice from the mountain sorrel is even better than the juice we buy from the store. Once the mountain sorrel are cooked they turn white. They were used to treat people who had no energy and those who had aching bones. Even now, I boil mountain sorrel every year.

I am going to try that this summer. Do you cool it first?
Aalasi: You should drink it when it is cold.

Does it have a slightly sour taste?
Aalasi: Yes. You can mix it with water.
Jaikku: If you chew them by themselves, it is almost painful, because they are so siirnaqtuq, sour.

Aalasi: Those are the ones I know that were used as treatments for a stomach-ache.

Jaikku: They are really potent when they are fresh.

Aalasi: My mother would gather plants from the land and mix them together, when we were not feeling well. She would mix them with seal oil and blood. She would try to make us feel better and this would help. Once she had collected enough of them she would mix them in a bowl. She would use quarait, net veined willow, kigutangirnaquit, blueberries and paunnat, dwarf fireweed. Paunnat are the ones which look really pretty on the land in the summer.

Jaikku: They are the nice purple ones.

Aalasi: Dwarf fireweed acted the fastest. They were given to those who had indigestion. For those that had intestinal problems to the point where they had blood in their stools, if they ate maniq, lamp moss, which is used for the qulliq, it would absorb the excess acid in the stomach. When you ate the lamp moss you could take it with tea or broth or by itself.

Even if you only ate a small amount, it would absorb the excess acid causing the heartburn.

Jaikku: Lamp moss was good for you when you ate too much blubber or oil. The lamp moss would absorb the stomach acid immediately and you felt better right away.

Is maniq the same as ijjuq?

Aalasi: A lot of plants can be used for medicinal purposes. Lamp moss is ijjuq that is used as a wick for the qulliq. Ijjuit are the ones we pull out from the land, the ones that we dry.

Would you just use the ijjuq by itself?

Jaikku: Suputiit, the flowers of willows gone to seed, and ijjuq are mixed together when they are to be used as lamp wick. We didn't use the ijjuq by itself. It is different just looking at pictures in a book. It would make much more sense if we were walking outside and discussing the plants. During the summer, you would be able to learn a lot more.
Aalasi: It is hard looking at plants in a book. You would learn a lot more by taking a walk and then picking up the plants and smelling them. It would be much better if we took a walk in June, July or August. August would be the best month, because by then, all the plants have grown. September would be a good month just after school has started. Try and keep that in mind.

Jaikku: The plants start growing at the end of May, or the beginning of June. Then in late July, when it starts getting colder again, the plants begin to wither.

When someone had a cut, what did you use to cover it with?
Aalasi: Uqaujait, young willow leaves, are excellent if someone has a cut. You should pick up the biggest leaf and apply it to the wound after wetting it first. The leaf juices then flow into the cut.

Did that help the cut heal faster?
Aalasi: Yes. I want to change the topic for a minute. If someone had a really bad wound from a fall or from a gunshot, you should shoot a rabbit and take out the lungs and apply them to the wound. Rabbit lungs stop bleeding right away.

Would it stop the bleeding even if the wound was really big?
Aalasi: Yes. You cut the lungs open and apply them to the wound. This is an excellent way to stop bleeding. Urine was also used to stop the bleeding.

Jaikku: If the mikiliraq, the ring finger is tied, this will stop bleeding too. You had to bend the finger down so it was touching the palm of the hand and bind it with thread.

Did it have to be bound like that for an extended period of time?
Aalasi and Jaikku: Yes, it had to stay like that for quite a while.

Jaikku: Pujualuit, puffball mushrooms, are excellent for cuts too. Last year, I went for a trip with some other elders across the bay and one of the cooks got a bad cut on his little finger. Even though we put a bandaid on, the bleeding continued for a long time. Someone found a puffball and I applied it on the cut. It did not take very long for the bleeding to stop after that. There were some doctors with us, but they could not stop the bleeding with the bandaid. Once the pujualuk was applied, the bleeding stopped.
Did you tie your ring finger up with your other hand?
Jaikku: Yes. You would tie it up with your other hand.

Aalasi: If we had a lot of nosebleeds and lost a lot of blood, our ring finger would be tied.

I remember someone telling me to tie the finger with one hand to stop the bleeding. Which finger has to be bound, the one on the right or the left hand?
Jaikku: I often tied up the ring finger on my left hand.

Aalasi: Because I had a lot of nosebleeds, my finger was tied so often that I can hardly bend it today.

Is it best to tie the finger on the left hand?
Aalasi: I do not think it really matters which one you tie.

We heard that the body is quppariik, made of two vertical halves and that the right half is different from the left half.
Jaikku: Yes they are different. One side is bigger and stronger than the other.

Aalasi: It is really fun to pick plants. I often go for walks and have tea with my children. I even keep a supply of tea leaves because I really enjoy tea.

Jaikku: I used to do that because I had no other choice back then. These days, I don’t bother.

Aalasi: Kakilarnaqutit, the prickly saxifrage are good too. They are prickly. Mamaittuqutit, Labrador tea are excellent as well. Mamaittuqutit, Labrador tea are very useful. My mother used them a lot back then. They have a very strong odour.

Do they smell bad?
Aalasi: The fragrance is really strong. If you hold the plant, the smell transfers on to your hand.

Does it smell like perfume?
Aalasi: Yes, it smells like perfume. This was also given to people who had a sore throat.
Did you use it without cooking it?

Aalasi: You had to boil it.

Jaikku: We were really aware of plants that had medicinal properties back then because that was all we had to help us when we were sick.

**Treating botulism**

*How did they used to treat a person who had botulism?*

Aalasi: Do you know the dark part which looks like excrement in the fish, the *anaujaq*?

Yes.

Aalasi: Those who had botulism from *igunaup qupiqrun gratuitement*, aged meat, could be treated with that part of the fish. When my husband and I heard about one case, we went down to our net to get the *anaujaq*, and then we went to the hospital with four fish. We removed the excrement-like parts, and took them to the hospital. We were advised that the patient couldn’t have visitors because she was dying. We were told that the relatives were being contacted. We insisted that we wanted to try the traditional method of treating botulism as the patient was going to die anyway. We were strongly advised against this but we wanted to try. My husband and I went to see the patient. This was the late Liitia Onalik, Susie Onalik’s mother. She has since passed on. Her husband died at that time of botulism. Liitia was close to death herself. She was unconscious. I mixed the *anaujaq* in a cup and put some in her mouth with a spoon. A person who has botulism has a very dry mouth, not one drop of saliva is present. I put some of the *anaujaq* in her mouth and made sure she didn’t choke. That is how Liitia survived botulism. Keep this in mind if someone has botulism out on the land.

Jaikku: The *anajaq* is the dark line found along the spine of the fish. Make sure you do not throw that part out, because it is good to eat, even if you don’t have botulism.

*Do you mix it with anything else?*

Aalasi: You use it as is. A person that is near death cannot chew anything. You just put it in the person’s mouth and make sure they do not choke on it. It took the woman we were treating approximately two hours to start stirring about. She started to have tears in her eyes. Even though we were told that she would not survive, we treated her anyway. She ended up living for quite a long time.
Childbirth

*Can you tell us about the early stages of pregnancy?*

**Aalasi:** We were told what we should eat, how we should sleep, and how we should go outside quickly in the early morning. We were taught these things so that the baby would be healthy.

**Jaikku:** We were advised not to take our time when we were going outside so that the baby would come out faster during delivery. We were told not to linger at an entrance-way. We were not even allowed to look back if we were on our way out. We were advised to leave quickly if we were going out when we were pregnant.

*Were your laces not allowed to be long either?*

**Aalasi:** Our laces were not supposed to be too long.

**Jaikku:** If we braided our boot laces, we were not allowed to make them long and were not to braid them right to the end. We did this so the baby’s umbilical cord wouldn’t get wrapped around the neck.

**Aalasi:** I think some of the things we were told were true. We were also advised not to chew too much gum or the creases and folds in the babies skin would be covered with vernix making the baby hard to come out. We were not to wear tight clothing so the baby’s movements wouldn’t be constricted.

*What would happen if you wore tight clothing?*

**Aalasi:** The baby would not be well prepared to come out if tight clothing was worn. This could jeopardize the pregnancy.

*Were you not allowed to make the waist of your pants smaller?*

**Aalasi:** We were advised not to take our pants in at the waist because it might affect the birth canal as it would be difficult to dilate. I received this advice from my aunt, my mother, my grandmother and from women from our camp who visited my mother.

**Jaikku:** We received a lot of advice, especially during our first pregnancy.

**Aalasi:** We were not supposed to lie on one side for too long or else the baby would be in that position for too long too. We were advised to turn over every now and then.
Jaikku: When we got up in the morning, we were not allowed to just stay put. We were advised to get dressed right away, and to go out the door quickly so that we wouldn’t be in labour long.

Were you advised not to wear clothing that had holes in it?

Aalasi: We were always told not to wear clothing that had rips or tears in it. As women, we weren’t allowed to expose our skin.

Jaikku: It was unthinkable to expose your skin.

Aalasi: We were not even allowed to expose our skin at home. We were taught as girls to respect our bodies. Children and other members of the household were taught this as well.

Jaikku: We were told that the umbilical cord might be entwined if we braided our hair a certain way. If the umbilical cord wrapped around the baby’s neck it could become taut. That happened to a woman whose baby I delivered when I was really young. I was only seventeen years old then. I had to cut her perineum. She was in so much pain she was moaning from the pressure. Although there were other women present I was the only one able to make the incision. We had a special knife which was often used for cutting open boils. We knew that if someone had internal bleeding they could die. I had to make an incision to enlarge the opening for the baby to come out. Once I made the incision, her moaning subsided. It was very dangerous when this happened.

Aalasi: The mother-to-be was not the only one to be given advice. The father was as well. Today it seems as it the father is left out of the whole process.

Jaikku: Men don’t seem to be considered these days.

Aalasi: These days if a man makes a mother-to-be angry or causes other emotional turmoil nothing is said to him. Men weren’t allowed to be like that back then.

Jaikku: Men had to be really good to us when we were pregnant.

Aalasi: They also had to get dressed right away, go out quickly and be cheerful. This was the advice they were given. The baby was really important even before it was born.
They accepted the advice they were given because the elders’ advice was very good. It was good for the well-being of the baby so that it would be born into a healthy environment without violence.

Once the baby was born, our mothers and in-laws advised us to lay down with the baby even though we didn’t want to go to bed because babies want to be held.

**Jaikku:** Newborns are used to being in an enclosed area inside us. They are not used to being in so much space so they need cuddling.

**Aalasi:** We were advised to cuddle a baby by keeping one hand on the buttocks area and the other hand on the back. This would comfort the baby and it would fall asleep right away. Some children are on their mothers’ back past midnight because their mothers are still out visiting.

**Jaikku:** In the morning, babies get tired of lying down so they start getting cranky. Babies can be really bossy. Adults know the ways of babies.

**Aalasi:** Babies can’t do things on their own and they can’t understand well. Their clothing had to be loose so they would be comfortable while they were growing. It also had to be warm.

**What was done for a woman who was about to miscarry?**

**Aalasi:** If a woman fell or there was something wrong with a pregnancy you couldn’t stop a miscarriage. But if a woman went into premature labour she was advised to lie down and not move.

**Could anything be done if a woman had repeated miscarriages?**

**Aalasi:** If she had repeated miscarriages or her babies kept dying, she would be given a baby to adopt. Adopting a child seemed to stop the miscarriages and the babies from dying.

**Jaikku:** My son Qaapik, who is now deceased, was adopted by Qummuattuq because her children kept dying. Her mother asked me to give the baby to Qummuattuq. Because she adopted from me, the other children that she had survived.

**Aalasi:** We learned these things from our mothers, our grandmothers and our mothers-in-law. It was as if the adopted baby stopped the miscarriages and the babies from dying. The child was not adopted out because it was unloved or unwanted. This was
done because there was deep compassion for the women who were having a hard time having a baby. These women were given babies to adopt. That is what we know. Our mothers and mothers-in-laws had great knowledge. It should be recorded and written down.

_I am going to consider adopting. I have miscarried twice._

_Aalasi:_ This will eventually stop. It won’t continue on forever.

_In Nunavik I read that something could be placed on a woman’s stomach to keep her from miscarrying. If a woman was having a stillborn baby, what could the midwives do to help deliver it, after the baby’s heart had stopped beating and it wasn’t moving anymore?_

_Aalasi:_ Sometimes a stillborn baby was delivered the same way, but the contractions were very weak as there was no support coming from the child.

_Jaikku:_ The woman still had contractions to push the baby out, although the contractions were weaker. It was like being in labour. Maybe it is still like that. The doctors are the ones that deal with this today. Today labour is induced when the doctors know that the baby is stillborn.

_Aalasi:_ Back then, we never talked about babies being overdue. We just waited for them to come out naturally although they were considered high risk. These days women that are overdue are induced with a needle. Back then they were considered high risk but labour was never induced, because we had no means of doing this.

_Jaikku:_ I also heard in Kinngait that if a woman got pregnant later in life, the pelvic bone could no longer separate.

_Aalasi:_ This happens after a woman turns twenty-nine or thirty years old.

_Jaikku:_ These women had difficult deliveries. I heard they used a piece of wood to separate the _ingiq_, the cartilege connecting the pelvic bone, by pressing down on it. The _ingiq_ separates when we are giving birth. When the delivery was difficult, the wood was placed on the woman and pressure was quickly applied so the baby that was having a hard time could come out.
Aalasi: You would learn so much if we spent a year on the land. It would be nice if this opportunity was available to those who were interested. We elders cannot speak English but we have a lot of expertise. I am sure we would have a lot to teach.

Jaikku: We have a lot to offer. We could teach you about the things we used for medical purposes. You would learn a lot. We would keep a first aid kit handy, but try not to use it.

Aalasi: It would be good if there was a woman in the early stages of pregnancy there. Something should be done about this prior to the creation of Nunavut. We elders have a lot of knowledge about our way of life and we still remember what we were taught.

Jaikku: It would be good if young men came along too, so they could learn about hunting in the fall, winter and spring.

Aalasi: Pregnant women were advised not to scratch their stomachs or else they would get stretch marks which were sometimes even black.

Jaikku: We get stretch marks when the fine muscle tissue breaks apart.

Could a woman tell if she was carrying twins?

Aalasi: You could tell if a woman was carrying twins. I assisted in the delivery of twins once. After the first one came out, there was an indentation on the tummy so you could tell another baby was in there. We were not in a hospital.

Jaikku: To find out if someone was carrying twins, you could place an object on top of the tummy to see if it would fall off.

Aalasi: That’s because the naakuluapiq, the stomach was so big.

Jaikku: I almost had twins when I had my daughter. She had two swirls of hair on the crown of her head and her vagina looked like it had been connected to something else. That was the most painful delivery I ever had.

When we are in labour, we have contractions at intervals. This labour was painful all the way. I think that two babies had started to form and became one.

Aalasi: When a woman was in labour, she was given special care. I starting assisting at deliveries when I was really young as there were not many people in camps back then.
I learned a lot about midwifery from my mother. I assisted at some of my sister’s later deliveries. We had to know what to do with the placenta. We had to know what to do if a baby did not start breathing right away. We even learned how the head should be shaped by the midwife. That practice is not followed at the hospital at all.

**Jaikku:** Pressure was applied to the newborn’s head to connect the skull. That is not done at all any more.

**Aalasi:** The head was shaped. A baby that takes a long time to come out tends to get a cone-shaped head.

**Jaikku:** This also happened if the mother had her legs closed too much.

**Aalasi:** If the placenta did not come out shortly after the birth, we knew it was stuck. This would happen because the woman had tended to lie on one side too long during pregnancy or she had sat down too much. That would be why the placenta would be stuck. The midwife would apply oil from blubber to her hands and then insert her hand in the uterus, being careful not to let her fingernails touch the wall of the uterus, and pull out the placenta. We would only use our fingertips because the uterine wall is very delicate.

If the blood stopped flowing shortly after the birth, the midwife would insert her hand inside and the blood clots would be broken. A woman could die if her ammaniit, her genital area, was blocked by blood clots. She could stop breathing.

**Jaikku:** A woman had to make sure her milk was expressed so she didn’t get sick. I used to suck and spit out my own milk when my breasts were full and I had too much milk.

**What was done for a woman who was suffering cramps after the delivery?**

**Aalasi:** If there were cramps after the delivery, pressure was applied to the abdomen to soften the clots.

**Jaikku:** The pain comes and goes as the womb is shrinking back to its regular size.

**Aalasi:** The cramps are not just from blood clots. A woman might think it was something serious but it was just the womb shrinking back to its normal size.

**Jaikku:** Women felt akuanngujuq, cramps, when the womb was shrinking.

**Aalasi:** We could also feel pain from the blood clots before they were broken.

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**Perspectives on Traditional Health**
Jaikku: A woman tended to sweat and have difficulty breathing when there was a blockage after the delivery.

Aalasi: Clots could form if a woman’s body cooled down too quickly after the delivery.

Jaikku: I always lost a lot of blood after each delivery. I have had eight children. I was able to pull through even though there were no doctors then. As long as there was food available, I was not even scared when I lost a lot of blood. There was actually one delivery where I didn’t suffer much blood loss.

Aalasi: When a woman was losing a lot of blood, she would be given broth and hot water. That was how this used to be treated.

Women who lost a lot of blood did not die?
Jaikku: I survived even though I lost a lot of blood during my deliveries. I have had a lot of children.

What would be done after a woman went into labour?
Jaikku: I often went into labour after midnight. When the contractions got stronger and the baby had dropped, I would tell someone.

Aalasi: We stayed busy even when we were feeling contractions. We just made sure we stayed inside if there were obvious signs we were in labour. Sometimes we had a very quick labour, three pushes and the baby was out. Sometimes it only took two pushes. It was better when the baby came out quickly.

Jaikku: If you had given birth many times, you could estimate the time the baby would be born. I never told anyone I was in labour until I knew it was time to deliver. The first time I was in labour I wanted to defecate frequently and yet I could not go. When I was in labour I did not know what to expect the first time.

Was more attention given to a woman if it was her first child?
Aalasi: Yes, because she did not know what to expect. She would be given advice during her labour and delivery so she would know what to do and expect the next time. She wasn’t always going to be in labour when her mother and mother-in-law were present. The first delivery was given special attention, so she knew what to expect the next time.
Jaikku: A woman's first delivery would indicate what her other deliveries would be like.

Aalasi: We were given advice on the importance of childbirth and having a spouse. We were told to stay quiet so that the delivery wouldn't be long. We would not die from it so we were told not to groan and moan. It was all up to the baby and all we could do was wait. I thought I was going through something that nobody else had ever gone through when I had my first child. This determined what the delivery process would be like for my other children. All I could do was wait and endure the pain.

Babies don't want to feel their mother moving about as this is scary to them. The baby wants the delivery to be calm. The baby doesn't like the mother moving about, changing positions or getting up to go to the washroom. The baby feels uncomfortable with moans and groans, as it doesn't recognize these sounds. The baby wants to be in a relaxed environment and see the bright light at the end. If the mother doesn't relax, the light tends to be covered. That is what my aunt told me. I know for a fact that really happens. If the mother is restless and moving around and moaning, the baby feels uncomfortable. Once a woman was in labour, no one was allowed to just walk around as the baby would be reluctant to come out.

Jaikku: My mother squirmed because she was in pain. We were told not to squirm as pain was inevitable. We were told that we might damage our gitig, the small of the back, or our kuutsinaak, pelvic area, if we squirmed around. We would be advised not to squirm around even if the pain was severe as that was the only way the baby was going to come out.

What would happen if you scraped yourself?

Aalasi: When the skin is scraped in the vaginal area the skin does not heal the same way as other skin. If the mother was squirming around the baby might defecate and that could be dangerous.

Jaikku: In the days before there were doctors, if the baby defecated as it was coming out, the mother usually died because it is not possible to wipe the baby’s first feces off. It is even hard to wipe it off the hands. The mother could not survive if the baby defecated internally. That does not seem to happen any more.

Aalasi: My aunt taught me a lot. My mother did not teach me as much as my aunt. My aunt used to tell me the truth. She used to advise me to pull on my hair when
I was about to push so I would be distracted from the pain. That was what she told me so I used to really pull hard on my hair. That really helped me, especially when it was my last push.

**Were women in labour allowed to have their hair tied back?**

**Jaikku:** Everything had to be loose.

**Aalasi:** All our hair decorations would be removed; we even had to remove our rings. That was how bossy the baby was; it would rule over everything.

**Jaikku:** The mother shouldn’t have anything binding her.

**Even braids had to be undone?**

**Jaikku:** Yes. Everything had to be undone.

**Aalasi:** Today, women even deliver wearing earrings. Once we started nursing and the baby had diarrhea because it was reacting to something we ate, we would be advised not to eat what we thought the baby was reacting to.

**Jaikku:** Because the baby was exposed to whatever we had eaten through our breast milk, their stool was never the same.

**What did the midwife do to the baby after the birth?**

**Aalasi:** The midwife would shape the head of the newborn. She would also suck out the baby’s nasal cavity with her mouth as there was no other means of doing it. Then she would spit out the contents. That’s how this used to be done.

**Jaikku:** This was not considered disgusting. If the baby swallowed the mucous, it would take a long time for it to gain weight.

**Aalasi:** Some babies swallowed the mucous so they would have to be swatted on the bum to get them to start crying. They would take the baby by the feet and give it a swat on the buttocks or the back. After the baby started crying the nostrils would be sucked out.
Did this have to be done to all babies?

Aalasi: Yes, that was always done and the heads were always shaped by the midwife. They would always suck out the nostrils so that anything inside them such as amniotic fluid would be removed.

Do you think we were too quick to hand over the responsibility of delivering babies to the doctors?

Aalasi: This happened too quickly. We elders are dying now so you young people need to be taught these skills before it is too late. The government, including the doctors, were in too much of a rush to take over everything. We should have held on to our midwifery practices.

Jaikku: We practised midwifery until quite recently. I came to Iqaluit in 1953. I used to assist in deliveries as there were not many doctors who delivered babies back then. We first started giving birth in the American hospital here in Iqaluit. There also used to be deliveries in Niaqunguq. [The small community of Apex located three kilometers from Iqaluit.]

Aalasi: Newborns were not all the same size. Some were really big so their mothers tore while giving birth. Bearded seal oil was the best for that. My mother would use that for women who had a tear.

Jaikku: Tears were caused if the opening was too narrow, especially if it was your first baby. That happened to me with my first delivery.

Aalasi: My mother and my aunt told me that women who had long labours were advised to talk about things they were worried about that might be preventing the baby from being born. If there were issues between the father and the mother the woman was advised to discuss them at that time.

Jaikku: They were given an opportunity to talk about their wrongdoings. The baby comes into being through the mother. If the mother was under stress of some sort, either from cheating or from keeping other secrets, she would have to admit this because the baby had to be comfortable coming out.

Aalasi: The baby had to come out to a peaceful, relaxed environment. That was the advice we received when we were learning about giving birth. We passed this knowledge down to our own children as well. We had to welcome the child into the...
world, and take good care of it. We used to think that only those who could speak were capable of understanding, but babies understand. They know when there is joy or anger in a person’s voice. In the past the whole camp would come and welcome the newborn by shaking the baby’s hand.

Jaikku: Everyone was happy when a baby was born.

Aalasi: Because babies were born into a harsh environment and would be struggling to survive, we would have to welcome them.

Sometimes when we see a newborn, we comment in a loving way, “What a not-so-pretty baby.” Is it okay to do this?

Aalasi: You have to consider it as a pretty baby. The baby is aware of what is being said. The baby is born with feelings so we have to welcome them. I was asked by a fourteen year-old-boy why his mother did not ask him if he wanted to be adopted as a newborn before she gave him away. It was especially hard for those that were mistreated when they did not want to be adopted in the first place. We were told to acknowledge newborns that were being carried by their mother. Our mothers advised us to lie down with our babies to comfort them as they knew the feel of our skin. When they woke up we weren’t to just let them lie there. We needed to go to them and pick them up and talk to them. Even though we wanted to go out and do things alone at times, we would have to put the baby on our backs once in a while and take them out.

Jaikku: Even if we were in a rush to finish our sewing, if the baby became cranky from being inside too long we would have to take them out. Then they would calm down.

Aalasi: It is like their bodies needed fresh air. It was not what we wanted that decided our priorities, but what the baby wanted. You had to take a newborn out once in a while even when they were small. You couldn’t take them with you everywhere either, as you might tire them out. If you took the baby out late at night when it was tired, it could develop deep-seated anger. We have lost some of the ways of raising our children. We tried to listen to what we were told back then.

Jaikku: I am deeply touched when I see babies that are left lying on a couch when their mothers should take the time to hold them. They should be in their presence all the time even when they are content. You can carry them in your amauti while you are going about doing your chores. If you carry them more on your back than in your arms, they will be less cranky. When babies got tired of being carried, they would start to get cranky so you had to lay them on the bed.
Aalasi: You need to hold them. They need to stay with the mother. I do not agree with babies being bottlefed lying down and having a blanket holding the bottle in place. You have to have patience and time to feed a baby. If the bottle is placed in the baby’s mouth improperly, the baby gets bloated with air when they try to suck the bottle. These things hurt the baby’s feelings even if they cannot voice them.

Jaikku: That is how babies start getting sick.

When a baby’s feelings have been hurt, do they become more susceptible to being ill?

Aalasi: These days, babies don’t get enough attention. You have to praise all the baby’s accomplishments. Even the first time the baby stands up, it is a major accomplishment for them. You have to notice things like that. If a child feels like they are able, even after they have fallen, they will stand up and try again.

Jaikku: You have to be happy about a child’s accomplishments. That is one of the ways of strengthening a child.

Aalasi: Then the child realizes they can do something. We were told when we went for walks with babies approaching a year old, to give them the roots of plants to suck on. Back then, we used more plants than we do today. The root is called an amaaq. Some are really thick. You break them off by pulling them out of the ground, then you remove any debris, and clean them before giving them to the baby. The baby would suck at the root and eventually fall asleep. They would enjoy the juice in the root. These days, babies are given pacifiers to suck rather than roots.

Are roots good for the body?

Aalasi: Yes, they help the body. That was what we used to give our babies. I still give them to my grandchildren in the summer. Let’s go back to our discussion on delivery. I assisted a woman in labour at the hospital here who could not walk. She was from Ausuittuq. She now lives in Inukjuak. She was in labour for a long time, almost for three days. She was induced on the third day but the baby was stillborn. It was in such an awful state it reminded me of a dead fox. The stomach was so sucked in there didn’t seem to be any insides.

This was because the baby was dead. I started thinking about the advice my aunt and my mother had given me about stillborn babies. I decided to try to use their advice even if the doctors didn’t agree with me. I spoke to the interpreter as I could not speak English and the doctors could not speak Inuktitut. The mother had already been told...
that the baby had been born dead. When a baby is stillborn, you have to put the placenta on top of the mother’s stomach as it is a live tissue. I placed the placenta on the tummy, and put the baby that has been dead for some time face down on top of the placenta. The baby had been stillborn for a while. I got the feeling that the doctors did not like what I was doing. I was told that the mother was tired and that they were going to take her back to her room when the baby’s big toe started jerking. That baby who had been stillborn is still alive and well and holding down a job.

Jaikku: The stillborn baby came back to life?

Aalasi: The stillborn baby that looked like a dead fox was brought back to life by the placenta.

Jaikku: This happened when he was placed on what he had left earlier.

Aalasi: The baby’s body reacted to something familiar. The baby recognized the warmth of his mother’s placenta. The baby was in a tight space for too long a time so he ended up suffocating.

Jaikku: He died because of the delivery. He did not die of his own will.

Aalasi: My angusiaq, this boy I helped to deliver, is now a grown man. He is Anna Nungaq’s son. She was still living in Ausuittuq when she had him. This increased my belief in trying anything, even if you aren’t sure it’s going to work. If something is not going to work, it’s not going to work.

If you are going to revive a stillborn baby you need to put the placenta on the stomach of the mother and make sure the baby is face down on top of the placenta with its head pointing towards the feet of the mother.

Do you have to make sure it is positioned the way it came out?

Jaikku: The baby needs to be positioned the same way it came out, face down and pointing towards the feet of the mother.

Aalasi: Saimataq Pitsiulaaq from Kimmirut told me once that I seemed like a doctor without a degree. We elders have a lot of knowledge that is no longer being used.
Before you started trying to revive the baby, did you talk to the mother?

**Aalasi:** I told her what I was about to do. I told her that I had heard about this being done before. I just made sure she understood what I was about to do.

*Was the mother comfortable with this?*

**Aalasi:** Yes, she was fine. She is presently a seamstress. That was the last child she had. She was advised not to have any more children because of her disability.

*Did women in labour need to be comfortable?*

**Aalasi:** Women in labour had to be very comfortable. The midwives made them as comfortable as possible while they were delivering the baby.

**Jaikku:** They made sure that they were comfortable. When you are positioned at the back of a woman in labour, it can be very tiring but you try not to give in to it. You try and think about the woman in labour. My *arnaliat*, the girls I helped deliver, are now becoming old like me.

**Aalasi:** When I receive gifts from one of my *kisuliat*, one of the children I have helped deliver, it reminds me that I have other *kisuliat*. I have helped deliver so many babies.

*Can you give us an example of how you would endow the baby with certain characteristics at birth?*

**Aalasi:** I would say I wanted the girl to have long hair, or that I did not want her to fight back even when she was faced with a problem, or that I wanted her to be talkative, or that I didn’t want her to leave things she was sewing unfinished. For a male child I would want him to be a successful hunter, and take some of his catch to the less fortunate. Those were the types of things we said to the newborn boy or girl.

*Could you shape the eyes so they would look a certain way?*

**Aalasi:** Yes, we could do that, by pretending to fix the facial features the way we wanted them to be. Sometimes it seemed to be effective.

*Can you tell us about sipiniq, a sex transformation that occurs just before the baby is born?*
Aalasi: Yes, this occurs when the labour is taking too long, or if the mother is writhing around too much, Then the baby's sex gets transformed. I have seen that myself first hand.

*Were pregnant women forbidden to eat the tail ends of seaweed?*

Aalasi: I have never heard that.

Jaikku: I do not know about that either.

*I have heard that a man would have more sons if his wife ate seaweed while pregnant.*

Aalasi: Yes, you are right. Akisu just told me last night that his sister was told to eat a lot of seaweed so that she would bear a lot of sons. You can have a daughter with a round face if you eat a seal aqaq, the bone from around the hip area.

*Were women forbidden to drink broth straight from the pot?*

Aalasi: A woman who wished to have a dark-skinned child would drink broth straight from the pot. Men were not allowed to clean their plates with their tongue.

Jaikku: Or else when they went out hunting they would only find areas where the animals had already been caught.

*If a man ate scraps of caribou fat, would he catch a lean caribou?*

Aalasi: Yes, That is what Saamuuni, my mother-in-law used to say. If you ate scraps of caribou fat rather than pieces of it, you would catch a skinny caribou.

Jaikku: Boys would be told to carry babies on their backs so they could catch a whale easily when they became older.

Aalasi: I think what they say about this making them good whale hunters is true.

Jaikku: Men were advised not to wipe themselves with rocks after defecating. This was so their catches wouldn't sink underwater if the animal was too lean and didn't have enough fat to stay afloat.

Aalasi: If the wind was blowing for too long we were told to pull our pants down and expose our buttocks to the wind.
Jaikku: Children that were born as breech babies were told to do this.

Aalasi: Nuvija told us to do this when the wind blew for too long to clear up the weather and this seemed to work.

Were you supposed to do this while up on a hill?

Aalasi: Yes. We were supposed to do this at the top of a hill or at the highest point of the land. That is what we were told.

Jaikku: This was also done when it was foggy outside.

Aalasi: We were told to massage our stomachs when we were pregnant so the placenta would not stick, especially after the stomach hardened.

Were you able to tell if a child had a possible disability?

Aalasi: Yes. You could tell. If the baby was not able to hold its head up even though it was at a stage where it should have been able to, this was a cause for concern. People became suspicious if it took too long for a baby to hold its head up. They thought that it might have a disability or it might be deaf.

Is it true that babies were not allowed to hold tasiqqut, skin stretchers?

Aalasi: Yes. If they held skin stretchers they might end up becoming liars.

Jaikku: We didn’t have much to entertain our babies with. We handed them almost anything to keep them occupied. Babies get bored holding the same things.

Aalasi: We didn’t want our sons saying ‘rrr’ or their future wives would end up having a bad crotch. That’s not really true. The only time we made that sound was when we had a sore throat and we gargled with salt. Salt water from the sea is the best to gargle with.

What was it that made a baby cross-eyed?

Aalasi: I have never heard about that.

Jaikku: I do not remember.
Some babies die while they are sleeping. Did that used to happen back then as well?

Aalasi: That used to happen then too. I have known of babies dying while they were asleep. Some babies just died in their sleep without being suffocated. We were advised, though, never to nurse the baby while in bed or we might suffocate them with our breast. The urge to sleep is very strong when you are nursing a baby.

Jaikku: We were told never to put our arms around babies while nursing in bed or else we might cover them with our breast and they could stop breathing.

Aalasi: We might hug them to death. They could suffocate that way.

Jaikku: Saanniq from Kinngait lost quite a number of babies in that manner. When she was a young woman, she was a very heavy sleeper. She was not the only person this happened to. I just mentioned her because I knew her personally.

Were the mentally challenged prevented from getting pregnant?

Aalasi: I recall hearing that the mentally challenged were not considered fit to be anyone’s spouse so they were not fit to have children. I recall this being said about a woman in our camp.

Were funerals held for babies that died?

Aalasi: Always. We did not have wood for coffins so the grave would be made of rocks. We would cover the top with a slab of rock from the bed platform. We were very poor so that was how we used to bury babies.

Jaikku: We made sure the baby’s body was well wrapped.

Aalasi: We tried to use our cleanest cloth to wrap the body. We would wash the deceased before burial. We would try and make a decent grave whether it was for a baby or for an adult.

Jaikku: A mother whose baby had died had to make sure she drained her breasts. If she didn’t her breasts would become very full and the milk inside could harden. We could nurse another baby in the camp, not only if our baby had died, but if we had too much milk.
Aalasi: If there were clots of milk in the breasts this could become dangerous.

Jaikku: When I drained my breasts when I had too much milk, the milk had become salty. If the milk sat for an extended period of time it became salty. I know this for a fact because I removed my milk myself.

What would happen if a woman lost a lot of blood after giving birth?

Aalasi: In one case I know of, something cold was applied to the mother’s stomach. The pillow was removed from behind her head and the feet were elevated.

Were women given hot broth and hot water when that happened?

Jaikku and Aalasi: Yes.

Jaikku: We would be given something to help our blood thicken.

Did anyone ever attempt birth control?

Aalasi: No. I never heard of anyone using any type of birth control. Even women who were really busy with lots of children did not use birth control as we had never heard of such a thing.

We did not have any diapers. It was quite recently that diapers were introduced. We were taught to make babies urinate by holding them on our laps with our legs spread. Some mothers kept themselves very clean considering. It was as if the baby never had an accident. We had no diapers whatsoever. Babies did have accidents once in a while.

Jaikku: We would try and anticipate the baby’s needs. When hungry, the baby would start crying. After they had been fed we would position the baby to urinate. They would get used to the routine. If the baby was asleep on your back, you could tell they needed to urinate if they started squirming. Children who urinated routinely complained a lot if they wet themselves.

Have you heard that babies that had names picked before birth came out faster?

Aalasi: I have never heard that.

Jaikku: I do not know about that either.
I seem to recall hearing that if a woman was a sipiniq then she would give birth to sipiniit.

**Sipiniq, sex transformation**

**Aalasi:** If a woman was in labour for too long the baby could become a sipiniq.

**Jaikku:** I have heard that some become sipiniit after they were born, although that didn’t happen very often. I do not think this only happens to babies who take a long time being born.

*I didn’t have a long labour and my daughter became a sipiniit.*

**Aalasi:** That happens. Look at Kamiga who lives in Kinngait. You know who she is. The people who were going to adopt her went to see her, and they did not want to adopt her anymore when they found out the baby was a boy. The old lady Qiatsuk went to see the baby the next day and it had changed into a girl. The baby had become a sipiniq.

**Jaikku:** My mother-in-law was on her mother’s back when she became a sipiniq.

**Aalasi:** The people who were adopting Kamiga thought they were being led on when they were told the baby had become a sipiniq. Kamiga was very pale. They said that even the penis was really pale.

**Did those who were sipiniit end up being tomboys?**

**Aalasi:** Those that ended up being tomboys were the ones named after a man. They were treated like boys because of whom they were named after.

**Do some boys act like girls?**

**Jaikku:** Some boys act like girls. Ujjualuk acted like a girl even when he was older. He used to remove his pants and urinate like a girl, even though he had a penis. He was treated like a girl. He had long hair even though he was a boy. He did not want to be a boy.

*I never wanted to be a girl myself.*

**Aalasi:** That is what happens. When we were at an elders’ conference, we were advised not to treat a child the opposite gender as it can ruin the child’s life. It can hurt the child.
Even though they are named after a certain person, we are not to treat them the opposite
gender, especially when they get older. We have a girl that is named after Juusipi and I
try to let her father know what can happen if he treats her like a boy. I make sure she
knows that she is a girl.

Jaikku: My name is Jaikku even though I am a woman. I was named after my mother’s
father. Even though I was named after my grandfather my name has never bothered me.

Can you tell if a child had an illness or a disease by looking at the baby’s skin?
Aalasi: Yes, you could tell if the baby had an illness or a disease if the skin was pale or
looked odd, or if the child got goose bumps easily.

Is it okay if babies get goose bumps easily when they get cold?
Aalasi: Babies who get goose bumps when they are cold are fine.

Jaikku: Sometimes they can be caused by illnesses you cannot see with the eyes.

Aalasi: Yes, they could be caused by an internal illness, in their head, eyes or especially
the heart.

Could it be in the bones?
Aalasi: Yes. It could be in the bone marrow. If a baby only had a very small amount of
urine, it was a sign that the baby had a disease somewhere. You wouldn’t notice the
illness immediately, only later when they started walking. A child who urinates a fair
amount is a healthy child. My mother used to tickle the soles of a baby’s feet to see if
there was a response. She said if there wasn’t a reaction it meant there was something
wrong with the baby.

Did some babies have jerky movements before getting sick?
Aalasi: Some would have jerky movements just prior to getting sick.

Jaikku: Some mothers said they noticed that their children were having jerky
movements and not acting their usual selves before they got sick.

Breast milk
Was breast milk used to treat people who were snow-blind?
Jaikku: I have heard of it being used, but I have never used it myself.
Aalasi: My sister’s father-in-law, Kakkik, used breast milk that had congealed in the cold. After it had congealed he applied it to his eyes. Maybe it worked. Milk darkens when it gets cold and thickens.

What was done if milk hardened in the breasts?
Aalasi: It is dangerous for milk to clot in the breast.

Jaikku: Yes, this is very dangerous. When it clots it hardens.

Aalasi: My mother treated a woman with clots in her breasts with hot water.

Jaikku: When it felt like my breasts were going to harden, I made sure I drained them completely.

Aalasi: There was one woman with infected breasts whose skin turned red. It even started peeling. We got some salt water from the sea as we did not like using qallunaat salt. Once it was heated, it was applied to both breasts and they started draining. Breast clots are very dangerous because they can get infected. You have to use salt water from the sea to treat this.

Did you add plain water to the salt water?
Aalasi: It is best to just use salt water.

How was it applied?
Aalasi: You applied it with a cloth.

Jaikku: You would just leave it on the breasts and it softened the hardened milk.

Aalasi: You had to leave the cloth there for quite a while. Once it softened, the milk would come out eventually.

Jaikku: Milk turned really salty after it had sat for a while.

If a woman adopted out her baby, how did she remove her breast milk?
Aalasi: She could nurse other babies if there were any in the camp. If she had another child, she could nurse it. Women who could not drain out their own milk nursed other babies.
How did they nurse babies when they were travelling?

Jaikku: When they were travelling in the winter, they did not have to remove the baby from the amauti. All they had to do was move the baby from back to front.

Aalasi: That is how they did it when they travelled by dogteam.

Jaikku: My right breast is larger than the left one. The breast that was not nursed from as often is smaller than the other one.

What else was breast milk used for?

Aalasi: Probably it had other uses. It was also used to soak dry mucous. It was excellent for that.

Jaikku: Yes. It used to be squirted into a baby’s nostrils when they were dry. When both nostrils were plugged with mucous, they soaked them with milk. It did not take very long for this to work. I had completely forgotten about this. You have excellent questions concerning our old way of life.

Menstruation

When you started your menstruation for the first time, what did you use for menstrual pads?

Aalasi: It was hard to get hold of cloth.

Jaikku: Back then there was no cloth. We used caribou and rabbit skin.

Aalasi: Mainly rabbit skins. We made sure we had some handy that had been cleaned and dried in advance. They were also used during deliveries when necessary.

Jaikku: They were also used to wrap newborns.

Aalasi: They were also used for trim on a baby’s hood.

Jaikku: They were also used for padding for the baby in the amauti. They were placed at the bottom of the amauti to absorb the baby’s urine, and underneath the baby when it was lying down.

How did you use the rabbit skins as menstrual pads?

Aalasi: We kept them in place with our pants.
Did you use the skins more than once?

Aalasi: When babies peed on them, we would scrape off the urine and clean the skin. When we did not scrape them off right away, we would put them out to freeze. Then we would pound the frozen urine with a stick and it would come out easily. They were then put above the qulliq to dry as we would use them over and over again. They were well taken care of as we did not have very many.

Akisu: In the winter, they would be rubbed with snow before they were dried. The urine came right out.

Aalasi: It came right out and it dried up.

Jaikku: That is what we did with menstrual pads too.

Aalasi: I used rabbit skin with my oldest son Juili when he was a baby. He was born before there were any diapers. Eric was born after there were diapers. The only babies who had diapers at that time were the children of the Hudson Bay store manager.

Jaikku: I used rabbit skins with my oldest daughter Tutuarjuk and my son Ijitsiaq. They did not have diapers when they were babies.

Aalasi: Children from that era did not use diapers. We used rabbit skins. We used to make them pee too.

Jaikku: When we made the baby pee, we never even washed our hands afterwards. We were really strong back then and not as susceptible to germs.

Akisu: I think it was around 1960 when cloth diapers became available.

Aalasi: We first received them in 1958 and 1959 from the store manager as he had children. We used to receive diapers and second-hand clothing from the store manager and the hospital in Pangniquat. I think that was the first time diapers and plastic pants were used.

Jaikku: In communities where there were ministers, people were given used clothing. In Kimmirut, the minister there used to hand out clothing.
Delivery

Is the person who is behind the woman in labour called the sanaji as well as the arnaliaq?

Aalasi: The woman behind was called the sanaji when the baby was a girl.

Jaikku: She was called the arnaquti when the baby was a boy.

Was it only the one behind the woman in labour who called the baby her arnaliaq, not the others assisting in the delivery?

Jaikku: Yes, very much so.

Aalasi: Nowadays, even women who aren’t present consider the baby to be their kisuliaq; an arnaliaq if it was a girl and an angusiaq if it was a boy.

I always thought that the woman who saw the baby first was the one who had the arnaliaq if it was a girl and would be called arnaquti. Am I wrong?

Jaikku: That was not how it worked in our community.

Akisu: That is not how it works according to our customs. The child would call me anguitiquti. He or she would not call me sanaji because I am a male. My older brother Harry delivered his wife’s child alone. People from Kinngait, Kimmirut and Iqaluit use sanaji and arnaquti. These days I hear midwives being called arnaliaq when in actual fact it is the female child that is the arnaliaq. I have heard some of the children she helped deliver call Aalasi their arnaliaq.

Jaikku: If it’s a boy, the midwife calls him her angusiaq and if it’s a girl she calls her her arnaliaq.

Akisu: In the Pangniqtuuq area the midwife and the child both use the term arnaliaq to address each other.

Aalasi: The one behind gets to call the baby her arnaliaq. The first time I saw a woman delivering in a squatting position I thought she must be in a lot of pain. I never saw that in Pangniqtuuq. I was afraid the baby was just going to drop out of the mother and die.
Akisu: When my wife went into labour for the first time it was during the afternoon and she still had not delivered by night-time. Even though there were midwives present, my brother Harry went behind her, and squeezed her and that is how the baby came out.

Jaikku: Men are really sturdy to have behind you while in labour. Once I had a man behind me during labour. It was very comfortable to have a male there rather than a female, because you could really push your whole back against him.

Akisu: I guess a man’s back is more solid.

Did you have someone at your back if you were delivering on your side?
Aalasi: I always gave birth on my side.

Jaikku: It is only after we had the hospital, that I gave birth lying on my back for the first time. I gave birth to my other children in a squatting position. If a woman gave birth lying on her side, they would put something in between her legs to keep them from closing.

Aalasi: Yes. A kasujaikkuti, something to keep the legs open, was made for this purpose. They would also place wood in between the knees.

My daughter’s father was behind me when she was born. Would he be considered the sanaji?
Aalasi: Because he is not a woman, but a man, he would be called the angutiquti.

Was the person behind in charge of the delivery?
Aalasi: It seemed as if the person behind was in charge of those assisting in the delivery.

Was she the advisor?
Jaikku: She was the one who kept the woman comfortable.

Aalasi: Yes, she was the one who kept everybody informed.

Jaikku: Those who had experience being behind a woman in labour were very comfortable because they knew what they were doing.
Aalasi: Yes, some were able to hold their position. Those who were less experienced tended to move around.

Jaikku: My grandmother was behind me for a while, but she was not able to maintain her position.

Aalasi: The person behind me was Nuijaut's grandmother. She was an excellent person to have behind me. She did not move a bit, not even once. She just hummed softly.

Did they try their best not to move around? If you were behind a woman in labour, did you try not to move?

Aalasi: Some women were in labour for a long time. Even though the woman at the back got tired, she tried not to move. She would sit at the back and have the woman in labour lean against her. I delivered Taiviti when I was alone. It was only after Eric’s head and chest came out that someone came. Some of my babies came so fast!

Jaikku: Maybe my cousin Akisu used to be quick leaving the iglu or tent so you had quick deliveries. Perhaps his mother taught him to do that.

Aalasi: Saamuuni used to advise us to face the west. Your head should face that way. That is what Saamuuni taught us. I found it more comfortable if I had to lie down. Something would be placed to use as a foot support, a tukirummiag.

Would someone be holding you in place?

Jaikku: Yes.

Aalasi: We used to use an agvik, a sealskin scraping board as a pillow. You needed to make sure to pull your hair when you pushed.

Jaikku: The thighs would be positioned as well.

Aalasi: You would put pressure on the foot support when you pushed.

Did your legs have to be even?

Jaikku: Yes, they had to be level.

Aalasi: Yes, they had to be level or else the woman might get injured.
Nowadays we are told to keep our legs open.
Jaikku: An allaangaguti, something to keep your legs spread, would be made and placed between your knees to keep your legs open.

Do you think the position we are in at the hospital nowadays is for the benefit of the doctors?
Aalasi: We midwives find the procedure used today uncomfortable!

When the woman was in labour, did you match the amount of pressure you applied with the intensity of the contraction?
Aalasi: I would monitor the contractions. When the woman’s stomach hardened I would apply more pressure. As soon as the contractions started, we advised her to start pushing. In the hospital, women have to wait and are told not to push.

Would the woman be pulling her hair while she was pushing?
Aalasi: Yes, I found it comforting to pull my hair when I was pushing. I was taught to pull my hair when my baby was coming out.

I gave birth on a seat that looked like a portable toilet. It was made just for birthing.
Aalasi: Where?

In Montreal at a birthing centre not at a hospital. If a woman was ready to give birth in a squatting position, would someone be down there?
Jaikku: You would be pushing on the person’s knees with your hands. She would be supported by two women at her sides. They would be holding her hands.

Would someone catch the baby as it was coming out?
Jaikku: Yes. You would check to see where the head was, and if the baby was ready to come out, you would break the water.

Aalasi: I have burst the water with my nail many times. I even used a small knife once because I could not break Qummuattuq, Nuvija’s wife’s, water by pinching the sac, because it was too thick. I used a knife to break the water. It was not painful for her. She did not even feel it.
Make sure you invite me the next time you are delivering a baby.

Aalasi: I really like to be of assistance. I have delivered many babies.

I am going to deliver like that next time.

Aalasi: You will find it so comfortable you will want to keep delivering in that position.

It was much more comfortable for me to give birth with a midwife.

Aalasi: You would have to remove your rings and bracelets, and loosen your hair. Nothing should be tied. We used to be advised to untie our laces. I didn’t agree much with the doctors. We delivered babies at home because the mothers wanted to deliver there. One mother did not receive any Family Allowance cheques for two whole years because her baby was born at home.

Jaikku: They didn’t have much sense.

Aalasi: The government was looking for any way to control Inuit. They didn’t believe in our traditional ways.

Jaikku: That is why people did not get their cheques. They were using that as a deterrent to having babies at home.

Aalasi: They wanted everybody to give birth at the hospital. In Nunavik, Inuit are very fortunate to have the power to deliver their own babies.

I gave birth at a birthing center in Montreal which was part of a research project. There is a birthing center in Puvirnituq in Nunavik now.

Aalasi: Inuit are in charge of deliveries there and they do it the Inuit way.

I want to make sure this is known.

Jaikku: Before he even knew I was pregnant, my cousin said he was going to assist me when I was giving birth. I was separated from my husband during my first pregnancy for almost a year because I did not want to leave my mother behind. I used to get my way most of the time because my parents loved me very much. We were separated for a year and my cousin only found out that I was pregnant after he was told that I was in labour. He got back from a trip to the trading post after I had given birth.
Premonitions

Aalasi: If and when you have daughters or nieces who get pregnant, you will feel it in your breasts too.

*My mother said she felt that way.*

Aalasi: That happens to us when our daughters get pregnant.

*Could some people predict things before they happened?*

Aalasi: If your eye twitches it means you are going to see someone you haven’t seen for a while.

*Does it matter which one of your eyes twitches?*

Aalasi: Either one. Our eye twitches when we are going to see a friend or someone we haven’t seen for a while. If your skin twitches anywhere else, it is a sign that someone is going to die.

Jaikku: You would be considered to be *qilualatsijuq*, twitching for a reason.

*I have heard that another sign that a person is going to die is if you see the person larger than he actually is. Have you ever heard that?*

Aalasi: I have heard that before. For example, if I saw Akisu and he was like a giant, it would be because he was going to die soon.

*That happened to someone in Pangniqtuuq. The person only remembered the incident after the person had died.*

Aalasi: Yes, that is what happens. The person gets larger, *angillimajuq*.

*What do you mean by angillimajuq?*

Aalasi: It is when someone appears larger than they actually are because they are going to die. It is also said that if a person is always rushing about it is because they will have a short life and they are trying to get everything done before their life ends. It is also said that if a person grows too fast for their age, it is because they will have a short life.

*Could it also mean that a child would get a sibling?*

Aalasi: They used to say that if a baby smiled, he would get a sibling.
If a baby has two kajjik, swirls of hair on the crown of the head, did this mean the baby was making room for another?

Aalasi: What I have heard is that if there were two swirls on the head it meant they were almost twins.

Sailua said my daughter was making room for another because her swirl was at the side of her head. Could newborns’ faces be shaped at birth too?

Aalasi: Yes, you could pretend the baby had long hair; you could make droopy or large eyes, or you could make the baby have an upturned nose.

Jaikku: The midwife would do this to her arnaliag or angusiaq. She would pretend to remove the parka from a baby boy so he would be very capable.

I saw my child’s chin being pushed in and he ended up with a dimple.

Aalasi: That could be done too. Also if the hair was parted in the middle, the child would have a nice part.

I was also told that you could lick a baby’s eyelashes so they would be longer. I did that to my daughter and she now has long eyelashes.

Aalasi: Yes, that could also be done.

Infrequently used words

Are there names for the creases in the palm of your hand?

Jaikku: They are called sanatulutait.

Have you heard that if people have long creases they are not very creative?

Aalasi: Yes, I think that is so. I am going to check my daughter’s because she does not like making anything, although she is good at other things. She is a good woman.

Jaikku: That is just a saying.

Aalasi: In Puvirnituq in Nunavik, I saw a lady with six nipples.
How is that possible?
Aalasi: She had one normal pair and the others were not as big, but they were all nipples. The smaller ones were on the bottom and the bigger ones were on top.

My daughter has an extra pair of nipples. Were children checked to see if they were going to be creative?
Jaikku: Yes, they would check a baby’s sanatuitutat.

Were boys also checked for this?
Jaikku: Yes. They did that with all babies.

What is this lump on the throat called?
Aalasi: We used to call the Adam’s apple a qallunaujaruti, something that enables you to speak English.
Jaikku: They say you have a nice voice if you have a lump there.
Aalasi: Some people don’t have a lump there.
Jaikku: Yes, only males have them. I must be a bit masculine, because I have a small one.

What is the real word for this in Inuktitut?
Jaikku: It is called a qinganguaq, which means it’s like a nose.

The Adam’s apple of a caribou looks like a nose.
Aalasi: Yes. You can put it on top of your nose and it fits.

I started crying when I saw my mother, whom I call my ai, my sister-in-law, with a caribou qinganguaq on her nose. What are the muscles in your jaws called?
Aalasi: They are called kimmautiik.

Akisu: A kimmiquaq is the lump at the back of the hind feet of land animals.
What part of your body is the iituaq?

Jaikku: It is the name for the shortest rib in your body. They say that if your thumbs are really twisted, you can make things really well.

Are people with twisted thumbs said to be very talented?

Jaikku: Yes. They are said to be creative if their thumbs are twisted. I am always ashamed of mine. My sauniq, the person I’m named after, used to use the word. One who is waiting to see something is takummisittuq.

Footnotes

1 Atungaujat in Iglulik are leaves of mountain avens. In some communities in South Baffin this term is used for gilled mushrooms; in some communities in both North and South Baffin it refers to leaves that seem to sprout individually right from the ground, that are reddish in colour and shaped like willow leaves. These leaves are known as alatsaujat in other communities.
Mamisaijusituqait: Counselling and Healing Practices

Different categories of illness

Is there a difference between a person being aanniajuq, aanniqtuq or qanimajuq?

Aalasi: There are different terms in different dialects.

Jaikku: The term aanniqtuq is not the same as aanniajuq. You would use aanniqtuq if you suddenly got hurt.

Is qanimajuq more serious than aanniajuq?

Aalasi: Qanimajuq refers to a person who is bedridden because they are ill. Someone who is qanimajuq is in bed because they are too ill to be up and around. The person is not well enough to do anything.

Jaikku: Qanimajuq is being so sick that you cannot get up.

If a person is aanniajuq, can they get up and about?

Aalasi: Yes, even though a person is aanniajuq, they are able to be up and about even though they feel pain. If we were hit by a vehicle, it would be aanniqtuq. It would be the same if we slipped and fell. It is not the same as qanimajuq.

Jaikku: If a person is aanniqtuq, he is just aanniajuq, just in pain.

Aalasi: Yes. The person is capable of moving around and being up and about.
Jaikku: I have had mucous in my lungs for quite a while now. Sometimes I am in pain and sometimes I’m not. It is not a big concern to me so I will see the doctor when we are finished the course. I am taking medication to ease the pain so it doesn’t bother me too much. But if I move in a certain way, I can feel the pain.

Aalasi: That is an example of aanniajuq. She is able to do things.

**What would you call a person who was sick internally?**

Aalasi: We would say they were qanimajuq if they were sick internally.

Jaikku: If I was in a lot of pain, I would stay in bed and I would not be able to come here. I would be qanimajuq. Right now I’m not in any pain. If every time I moved around and was in a lot of pain and I was bedridden, I would be qanimajuq. Otherwise, it is just aanniajuq. Even though we feel some pain we are able to do things. As we grow older, it gets harder for us.

Aalasi: As we grow older we are sick more often. Every time someone asks me how I am doing, I reply that I am fine even though I feel quite tired.

**If someone had a cut would they be aanniqtuq?**

Aalasi: They would be aanniqtuq if they were hit by a vehicle or if they were nakattuq, had fallen and broken a leg.

Jaikku: Actually if you broke a leg it would be naggijuq not nakattuq. That would be an example of aanniqtuq.

Aalasi: The interpreters at the hospital need to know the difference between aanniqtuq, aanniajuq, and qanimajuq. Elders more than sixty years of age do not speak any English. If the interpreters do not know the difference in terminology, some doctors get the wrong information. That is what happens when an interpreter does not have enough training to accurately repeat what the patient is saying. Interpreters need to have a lot of training. Some people have illnesses that the doctors don’t hear about because the interpreters do not know how to interpret correctly. Sometimes medication that is not suitable for the patient is prescribed because of miscommunication. If we are going to have Nunavut, the interpreters will need more training than ever.

Jaikku: I strongly agree with that.
Aalasi: I strongly recommend that interpreters get proper training before Nunavut is created.

Jaikku: If someone is not seriously injured, the medication that the doctors prescribe may be too strong and it might be harmful.

Aalasi: The wrong type of medication can damage the bone marrow, or the brain or the bones.

If you take antibiotics when you don’t really need them your body can develop a resistance to them and they they don’t work when you are really sick and you do need them.

Jaikku: Some people are harmed by medication.

Aalasi: The medication that is prescribed does not have instructions in Inuktitut, only in English. We cannot understand what we have to take and when to take it. If our children do not read the instructions to us, we do not know what the prescription says. I know of an elderly person who took medication orally that he was to insert in his anus because he was not given instructions. For that reason, we need to get proper translations with our medication. You should make this a part of what you are studying here. It scares me to know that elders do not receive proper translations. I do not understand why. Iqaluit is a big community now and yet we still do not receive proper translations. It is very frustrating sometimes.

Jaikku: I know of cases where people were prescribed medication that was too strong so they had to stop taking it. They were prescribed weaker medication after being given medication that was too strong for them the first time. I know this has happened many times.

Aalasi: At the hospital, the terms aanniqtuq, aanniajuq and qanimajuq are not well known. They need to be clearly understood. I have stopped taking many different types of medication because they were not relevant to my sickness.

Yes.

Jaikku: I do not normally take medication even if I am feeling a bit of pain. The medication that was prescribed to me was too strong. I am supposed to take two pills every four hours. I only take one now and then when I need it. I take less than three a
day and that’s enough for my pain. The doctor knows me pretty well. He told me that I could take the medication as needed. There has to be more attention paid to medication. Some medications are really strong and can be very dangerous.

What does qavuq mean?
Aalasi: People who are qavuit are so sick, they are bedridden.

Would they be like someone who was qanimajuq?
Aalasi: Yes.

Is this word used for both humans and animals?
Akisu: Yes. Animals that are sick are also qavuit.

Aalasi: If an animal such as a caribou or a seal was caught and it was sick, then it was not eaten. It was qavuq.

Jaikku: Animals would be qavuit if they had a disease. In Kinngait where I come from, we call ducks qavuit if they are really frail and sickly and are so weak that they cannot even fly. Their stomachs are sick from something they have swallowed. When they are like that we say they are qavuit.

Aalasi: Some seals have a disease in their intestines and their livers. They are also called qavuit. Some Inuit use the word qavuit for sick people. We have different dialects.

Akisu: People from this area do not use the term qavuit to refer to humans. I know that in the old language, sick animals were called qavuit. When people were hunting, both land and sea animals were called qavuit when they were sick. People from this area do not use the term qavuit for humans even though we understand it if it is used by other people. Young people today call both humans and animals qavuit when they are ill.

Aalasi: Even if someone is lethargic they say they are qavuq.

Jaikku: In my dialect, that’s not the word we use.

Akisu: We should try and make an effort to understand terms for the same thing from different dialects.
I have heard that worrying can be very stressful.

Aalasi: That is the truth. We all experience that. Worrying can be very stressful. It can even destroy people.

Jaikku: People that are too depressed can commit suicide. Because they are so depressed, they carry a heavy load and become sick internally.

Aalasi: They have a mental illness.

Is being depressed an illness?

Aalasi: It is an illness of the mind, not of the body.

Akisu: Isumaluttuq and isumaaluttuq have different meanings. A person who has a bad temper is isumaluttuq. A person who is in a worried, depressed state, is isumaaluttuq. If you know how to use finals in syllabics, you can see that the words are different. You can only tell the difference if the finals are written.

Would an earache be considered qanimaniq or aannianiq?

Aalasi: An earache is not qanimaniq. It is aannianiq.

Are children the only ones who get earaches?

Aalasi: No, adults get earaches too.

How does the eardrum become punctured?

Jaikku: It probably becomes punctured if it bursts when someone has an ear infection.

How were you able to tell if someone started getting ill?

Aalasi: In the past people got sick like they do today. Often we couldn’t tell where a sickness came from. If it was a stomach-ache or a headache, we were able to tell what it was. People were not sick very often back then though, only rarely. Quite often we couldn’t tell where an illness came from.

Jaikku: We could only tell where an illness came from when the ship came in. Everyone would get a cold then. That is what it was like when I was growing up in Kinngait.
Aalasi: When a dogteam went to get supplies, that was another time we would catch a cold. Once we got over it, we would be really healthy again.

Jaikku: Not too long ago, people started getting diseases such as measles. We suspected that they came from the *qallunaat*. There used to be sicknesses that everyone caught that were contagious and we thought these came from *qallunaat*. When dogteams from different camps met each other, we would hear about a person that was ill from another camp. It was very rare for someone to be ill.

Aalasi: In the past no one thought that diseases were contagious. Even when we were caring for a person who was ill, we did not think twice about catching anything. Even if the person who was ill was in bad shape, nobody ever stopped to think that they might catch what that person had. We did not even think about washing our hands after caring for a sick person. When we were caring for a very ill person, we would be exposed to the sick person’s spit and to their blood.

Jaikku: We would even use the same containers they spat in over and over again, without cleaning them or wiping them.

Aalasi: We would use the same ones over and over again as we did not have any others. We did not catch anything at all. Today, if we are caring for a sick person we are advised to wear gloves. We didn’t know that back then. Those of us over the age of fifty don’t really believe in wearing gloves. We were used to taking care of very sick people who were dying. It was only after the *qallunaat* came that there were contagious diseases. That was the first time we heard that illnesses could be contagious. We did not think like that before.

Jaikku: When we used to live in Kinngait, colds were the only thing we knew that were contagious. We used to catch colds when I was a little girl.

Aalasi: Elders today, including myself, think that lice help to control and remove illness from our bodies. People always got fresh blood when the lice sucked out the old blood from our bodies. We elders like to think that lice remove illnesses.

*Do you think our health is connected to the land?*

Aalasi: In the past, people had a very healthy diet. The food they ate prevented them from getting sick. Eating plants that came from the land and not from the
store also helped to keep people healthy. They would search for plants and for seaweed on the beach. They had a very healthy diet. They would eat a whole seal including the intestines.

Jaikku: They used to eat the entire seal except for the gall bladder, the bladder, and the contents of the intestines. Those were the only inedible parts.

Aalasi: I ran into a woman who had the same idea about something as I did. Back then, when we were living more traditionally we ate healthy country food. Only when we were low on food did we eat whatever was available. Because of this, our bodies do not recognize food from the store or medication. That is the reason why we get sick so easily.

Jaikku: We were not raised eating food from the store. It does not seem like a proper diet for children today. Mothers used to feed children boiled meat and broth. That was the main diet for a child who was learning how to walk. The mother would chew the meat and feed it to the child, softening it first. Mothers would also take sips of broth and pass them to the baby orally. We never even thought that we might be passing on something contagious by feeding our babies this way.

Aalasi: When I visited Nunavik, I noticed people still doing that, especially elders feeding their grandchildren. Elders still do that with fish broth too. The doctors are amazed that a child fed like this can be very healthy or big for their age. A person needs to eat well to grow and be healthy. Some children go for a whole day without eating now. They are following their mothers around and staying up all night. They are tired, and don’t get the fluids they need for their bodies.

Jaikku: Children like to eat when they get hungry. They like to nibble on things all the time. They like living in a stable home. Preschoolers like to nibble all day. These days, children do not eat as much after they start in school because they spend the whole day there.

Aalasi: Even after school, they do not spend very much time with their parents. Because of that, they are not eating as well as they should. They stay up much later now. They are tired and for that reason they don’t seem as healthy. Also, the clothing they wear today is not very warm.
Relations between men and women

When you were young was a person’s physical appearance important to you?

Aalasi: Yes it was. It was important to have a healthy body. If a person had a healthy body, it meant that he or she was taking care of him or her self. We were advised to take care of our bodies.

Jaikku: We were advised not to have premarital sex so that we could get a husband. Things like “Men are not going to desire you,” “You will not have a husband,” or “You will stay unmarried for a long time,” were the things that were said to us. Even though we did not really want a husband, these words were very scary.

Aalasi: Even though we didn’t want a husband we listened to our parents’ advice. We were told never to wear torn clothing. We tried to be presentable. Women had to try and take care of themselves. That was one way a person could tell whether you took care of yourself or not. Someone who took care of themselves would be chosen over someone that did not. It meant that they would be able to take proper care of their children.

Jaikku: We were advised to stay away from men so that we would have a stable home later in life. We were told not to have sex with anybody; not to let men play with us. That was the advice we received.

Aalasi: We were told that if we were with a man he would tell everyone we had been with him. After a man had been with a woman, he would tell stories about her. We were told to commit ourselves to one man so that rumours about us would not be spread. We were told that a man would never settle down with us if we slept around. It was as if women were just beads on a string.

What do you mean just beads on a string?

Aalasi: It is as if the man is stringing up women like beads. He would be with me, then with you. It has been said that men spread stories about women and that is the truth. A woman was advised only to go with a man that she had committed herself to. She was not to give herself to a string of men. Some women bear children from men they are not going to live with. Most men do not want this type of woman. We used to be attracted to men but this was in our minds only. We never had any relationships with them.

Jaikku: Sometimes we would steal glances at a man while he was not looking. We would not dare to make eye contact if he looked at us. We could only look at a man if he was unaware of this.
Aalasi: If he was not going to be our husband, we were advised not to pay any attention at all.

Jaikku: We could admire a man like we admired other things.

Aalasi: A woman who did not consort with men was considered a good potential wife. You could tell that she would take good care of the household and the children. You brought up an important question. You will be able to use our advice with your own children. Because our children do not listen to us anymore it seems we haven’t told them about these things. We have the desire to pass on what we have been taught.

Jaikku: No wonder. It was scary not to listen to what you were told. We were advised by our mothers, our grandmothers, and our relatives that we should not hang out at any old place. It seemed like we were given advice every day.

Aalasi: It seems as if we were given advice all the time!

Jaikku: We were told that when you had sex with a man it would be painful. Once you are being given to a man, ouch, how painful. Our whole body hurt and it was scary.

Aalasi: There was one piece of advice I often remember. I guess this was because what was said meant a lot to me. You have heard of Ilaia Kiinainnaq’s father, Kiinainnaq. I visited their place when I was pregnant the first time. While I was eating, the people I was visiting went out and Kiinainnaq spoke to me. He was a minister. He used to preach outside. He told me to stay behind because he wanted to talk to me. He said, “I have something to tell you and you look like the type of person that is easy to talk to. I am going to advise you how to live your life. You shouldn’t have sex with anyone except your husband. Even if a man tries to go with you, you have to stand firm and refuse. If you refuse, he will not try it again. Even though we men want someone, if the woman does not say yes, then we don’t bother trying again. Don’t ever think of anyone except your own husband. If you start thinking of someone else, then you are already caught in a bind even if you tell yourself that you are not going to go with him. If you start thinking about another man, his feet will end up under your blankets.” That is what he said to me. That advice has had a very big impact on my life. It is as though it is the wind on my sail. I am really grateful for his advice as it has guided me through life. That is the kind of advice we should be giving our daughters and nieces. The problem is that they do not want to listen. You get the feeling they won’t agree with your advice anyway.
He was my grandfather’s grandfather.

Jaikku: Young women no longer listen these days. When we were young, we always feared men and we were never near them, so much so that we would end up marrying men we didn’t even know. We married men we did not even know. We were virgins then. People tend to laugh at this when we say this now, but we used to get married to men we didn’t even know. It is not like today at all.

Aalasi: There used to be marriage ceremonies where the woman was crying because she did not want to get married. She would say, “I do,” because it was God’s will. When you look back, it seems that marriage worked better then than it does today. I wasn’t crying when I got married. We were married outside after my first child was on the way.

Jaikku: I got married after I had had my first child.

Could you tell that a man was attracted to you by the way he looked?

Aalasi: Yes, it is still like that today. You can tell if a man is attracted to you by the way he looks at you. We don’t try to notice this but it is obvious.

Jaikku: When a woman refuses to go with a man, he doesn’t try again. He wouldn’t dare.

Aalasi: He can be friends with the woman, but if he thinks that he can go to bed with her, he will keep trying. A woman has to take proper care of herself. My father gave me more advice than my mother did because I spent more time with him. My father used to talk to me about what a woman should be like. He used to say if I didn’t take care of myself, then I wouldn’t be able to take care of my home either. This advice is like a woman’s Bible. A woman who takes care of herself takes care of her home and is committed to taking care of her family. If a woman did not take care of her house or if she did not help her husband when he was preparing to go hunting, she was considered a bad wife. A woman like that was one who had slept around when she was young.

Were you able to tell that a person was in pain even though he or she looked alright?

Aalasi: Are you taking about physical illness or depression?

Both of them.

Aalasi: Even if someone is up and about, it is not hard to tell if they are depressed. They often isolate themselves from others.
Jaikku: Today people who are depressed are more visible. Back then, people didn’t seem to suffer from depression as much.

Aalasi: There did not seem to be as many depressed people back then.

Effects of the weather on the body
Some words are used for both the body and for the weather. For example, ikullaumijuq means the weather is calm, and it also means a sick person is getting better.

Aalasi: Yes. You are correct. The full moon, bad weather and calm weather affect a person.

Another example of this is auppuq, which means the snow is melting or his nose is bleeding.

Aalasi: Yes, the word has two meanings.

It is as if our bodies and our environment are similar.

Aalasi: No wonder! We are part of the earth, therefore the words are quite similar.

Do you know of any other words like these?

Aalasi: All I know is that a person can be affected by the weather. If the weather is fine, I feel better but if there is a blizzard, if the sky is not clear like today, I find my body heavy. That is the way it is; a person is affected by the weather.

Akisu: If you are in good health, you don’t feel the weather.

Jaikku: Yes. You will not feel it. Those who have had surgery many times are severely affected by the weather.

Aalasi: I can feel it in my scars if the weather is going to be bad.

Akisu: I know Aalasi is very affected by the weather because she has a lot of surgical scars.

Aalasi: I have had a lot of surgery. I have been put under many times. I have had surgery on my spine.
Akisu: She has many scars so she is really affected by the weather and by the full moon.

Aalasi: If I wake up in the morning with my body feeling heavy, even if I haven’t even opened up my eyes yet, I know the weather is bad or there is going to be a storm or snow or rain. When I wake up feeling well, I know that weather will be beautiful.

Akisu: If you have good health, the weather doesn’t affect you.

Aalasi: When you are healthy you are not even aware of the weather. It is only when you have an unhealthy body, you notice it.

Is your body affected when there is a full moon too?

Aalasi: Yes. A full moon really affects the mind and the body. Your body becomes heavier and slower. I learned from an elder that spring water comes out at the full moon. I was told that the ends of our hair split open at the full moon as well. I did not believe what the elder had told me so I checked out my hair and it was true.

What is it called when your hair opens up at the ends?

Aalasi: Qullurniit, split ends. This elder also told me that if you pay attention, you can see that the hair in a man’s mustache has split ends during a full moon. These things such as the spring water coming up really happen. I guess you all know or have heard of Lia Nutaraq, Siipa’s mother. She taught me these things and they are true. I used to go and see her when I was feeling depressed. I always felt better after I went to see her. If I was having problems related to my husband or to my children, I would seek advice from her. She would advise me to go to sleep with my bed facing the north. North is the best direction to face when sleeping.

Akisu: When there is a north wind there are absolutely no clouds, and the sky is very clear. It is only when the wind is coming from another direction, that the sky is not clear. If it is calm at night after a north wind, the next day well be calm, but if the north wind calms down in the morning then the wind will shift and start blowing from another direction.

Aalasi: During the full moon the ends of our hair split more and we can get little bumps on our skin. These bumps are called niiumait, goose bumps.

Could your body give you signs about what the weather would be like?

Aalasi: Yes. We did not have any weather instruments back then.
The relationship between illness and the environment

Aalasi: I’d like to add something on that topic. I wanted to tell you about going through a time of hunger when there was much unhappiness. After this had passed we were advised to throw a piece of food whenever we passed the place where this had occurred. Earlier we told you about going up on a hill or a high point, and having to pull our pants down and show our bum towards the wind if it had been windy for a long time. We used to be told to throw a piece of food when we were passing by this place by boat or dogteam. Nuvija Aipili has a lot to teach about many different topics. He is the one who told me about throwing a piece of food at this place.

Have you heard that when people started getting sick the land was considered hot and they had to move to another area?

Aalasi: Yes. In the spring we would move to another camp away from the area where people had been sick. My mother and my paternal aunt knew about this.

Jaikku: If there had been sickness at a place it was not suitable to live there any longer.

Did the land actually become hot?

Aalasi: No. It wasn’t actually hot. Back then, we used to work together. Any animal that was caught was shared equally even when we had our own supply of food. We always respected what was caught. Food doesn’t come from people. It comes from the land. Whether it is a small bird or a large animal, they have to be respected just the same.

Jaikku: We would welcome the food.

Did people have heart attacks back then?

Aalasi: Yes, that has always happened. There have always been people who have died suddenly. The difference today is that many people get heart problems from stress caused by other people. Back then, people did not have heart problems early in life.

Jaikku: The only way that you could tell if someone was ill was by using your eyes and your ears. We did not have any instruments to do check-ups with back then.

Were people more fit back then, before qallunaat food was available? Were there any overweight people?

Aalasi: There were no extremely overweight people. Even though there were some heavy people, it was a different type of heaviness. The way that people sit today is also...
part of the reason why they are overweight. Snowmobiles also contribute to this as not as many people walk anymore. Another cause is people wearing stretchable clothing. Today people look more bloated than they did before. I don’t know why.

Did they use the term quinijuq for a person who was fat back then?

Jaikku: Although there were only a handful of fat people back then we called them silittuit, stout. While I was still living in Kinngait, my grandmother told me a saying about women who gained weight. A woman who had sex with a man too soon after her husband died gained weight and was said to be pullagtuaq, bloated. We would only see fat people once in a long while. There was an old policeman named Uvinik. When he was younger, he came to Iqaluit, and noticed that there were quite a number of overweight women. He commented on that because he knew the old saying. I believe in that myself. I gained weight after being with a man even though it was more than three years after my husband died. I finally touched a man the fourth year after his death. My stomach got quite big. I really believe in that saying, even though this did not happen to me right away.

I looked like I was bloated after my spouse died. They say that happens to some people.

Aalasi: This happens sometimes after you lose a spouse.

Did that also happen when people stopped being under stress?

Jaikku: It was the truth for me.

I guess that also happened when people became less stressed.

Jaikku: Yes, definitely. Women went through a lot more things compared to today.

Aalasi: I used to be quite chubby at one time. I even had dimples. I lost some weight but later I gained the weight back again.

Was the term uvinnittujuq used for those who were heavy as well?

Jaikku: Those who had always been heavy, that didn’t become fat, were uvinnittujuq. My aana was uvinnittujuq.
When do we use the term aana?

Jaikku: My father’s mother is my aana. If she was my mother’s mother, then she would be my anaatsiaq.

Aalasi: These days, everybody seems to use the term anaatsiaq for both grandmothers.

What do you call your mother’s father?

Jaikku: Both grandfathers are called ataatsiaq. There are only different terms for grandmothers.

Aalasi: We Inuit did not have any written information. Qallunaat have everything written down. What we say will be written for our descendants.

Jaikku: It should be written down. I always tell myself that I am going to write things down before I am interviewed so that I have notes in front of me. I think about it but I am not very comfortable writing.

Practices before the introduction of bio-medicine: the uses of amulets and other objects

Aalasi: If you mix together the contents of a bird’s stomach while they are warm you can use this on impetigo, or an infection or a wound. It was very effective. I saw this being used to treat my older sister. She had a very serious eye infection. She could not even open her eye. We don’t really take the time to try out different remedies anymore. Remedies made from birds and animals that eat plants are the best.

Jaikku: We found out what worked through experimentation. Everybody relies on doctors now. Back then we experimented with different things to find out what was effective.

Aalasi: If you are out on the land for a long time or you got caught in a storm, these remedies could still be used.

Did you use foxes as well?

Aalasi: I have never heard of them being used. If a person was snow-blind and could not open their eyes, tea was used to treat them. I have never been snow-blind. I used to envy those who had been.
Jaikku: I didn’t find tea bags that effective on my eyes. I often had snow-blindness.

What was used before tea bags were available?
Aalasi: Before tea was available, rabbit droppings were used. You would crumble them up, wrap them in cloth and apply them to the eyes. That is even better than tea. They are best when fresh, moist and wrapped in a cloth. They were said to work even better than tea.

Jaikku: My grandmother used to use sungaq, the gall bladder of a fish.

Did she use this to treat someone who was snow-blind?
Jaikku: No, she would use it to treat someone who was feeling pain. She used it as an ointment and rubbed it on an ache or pain.

Aalasi: The gall bladder is yellow in colour. The flesh of a fish will turn yellow if it touches the gall bladder.

Was it just the sungaq from a fish that she used?
Jaikku: Yes.

Aalasi: We even used to deal with tooth extractions. The tooth would be tied tight and pulled out. That was the only way they had to deal with a toothache.

Were you told to throw your tooth to a dog so you would have strong teeth?
Aalasi: Yes.

Akisu: That is how it was.

Did you hide it in a piece of palaugaq and feed it to the dog?
Akisu: Either that or in a piece of blubber. We hid it inside, and threw it to the dog. Then we would have excellent teeth. That is what I have heard.

Jaikku: We were told to do that every time we lost a tooth.

Aalasi: What they said was true.
Akisu: Everything that was done was done for a purpose. The part inside the fish that blows up, the puttaqquti, was used as an attati. When I was a small child I had one for an attati.

**What is an attati?**

Jaikku: Something you carry with you all the time.

**Is an attati the same thing as an aarnguaq, something you carry with you all the time for protection?**

Akisu: It is like an aarnguaq. First, you would try and prevent the puttaqquti from bursting. Then it would be dried and worn by a child so he would be a fast runner when he became an adult. The claws of the snowy owl were also used as an aarnguaq. A boy would wear them to make him strong.

**Would the attatiit help people to be strong physically?**

Jaikku: They wanted boys to be strong.

Akisu: What we are discussing makes me think I should give an attati to my grandson Simiuni. It worked for us. It was part of our culture and seemed to serve its purpose. We do not use these anymore.

**Are snowy owls edible?**

Aalasi: Of course. They are at their best when they are fat.

Jaikku: Just like a fox.

**Is the puttaqquti pink in colour?**

Akisu: It is long and right next to the spinal cord.

**How do you keep from damaging it when removing the guts? Do you gut the fish while it is frozen?**

Aalasi: For sure. Then it will not be damaged.

**After you removed it, did you blow it up?**

Aalasi: Yes. It lasted for a long time. You could also play with it like a balloon.
After they blew it up, where did they wear it?

Akisu: They attached it with thread.

Aalasi: A lot of children will be wearing aarnuq when we start catching fish.

I am going to put one on my chubby daughter. She is a very slow runner. I’m going to put one on my son too but I need to get the claws of a snowy owl first. Have you heard the story about the first angakkuq who had an itiq, a sea urchin, for an aarnguaq?

Akisu: People from different communities use different things.

Aalasi: Maybe people from further north used them more.

Akisu: People from South Baffin didn’t use them as much. We have to gather this information. The way I see it today, we elders seem to be hiding in the stem of a pipe. We only come out when we are asked to help and meet with others and then we go back into the pipe again. We need to write our traditions down, even though in the past we passed them on orally. People are starting to discuss how families stuck together and how everyone lived a good life. They are talking about what created this harmony. Qallunaat have a lot of written information about their history. We Inuit should start writing things down too so that our knowledge is not forgotten and it is passed on. Inuit are very caring, very loving and very forgiving. We don’t hold grudges. This knowledge has to be passed on so people know about these things.

Aalasi: We should talk about using animals for food, and how one should not torture animals. This is very important information.

Jaikku: It definitely has to be brought up. There have been animals killed which were not used for food. Animals are not toys to be played with.

Akisu: You are not to look down nor make fun of a person who is physically challenged, or a person who slurs their speech. If you make fun of their disability, the same thing will happen to you at a later time.

Aalasi: Even if it is not you yourself who is affected by this, it could be your child.

Akisu: It could be your child or grandchild who was affected.
Aalasi: It could be very risky for your descendants.

Akisu: For that reason, we are not to make fun of people with disabilities. It is not their fault.

Aalasi: Look at Qimmiqut Aakakaaq’s wife who was buried not too long ago. Her brother was Palluq. He was adopted by Arnakallak. When he was down south being treated for tuberculosis, Malaija’s husband Jaikkupuusi was there with him. Jaikkupuusi had a disability that was a result of an injection that affected his brain. He was unable to speak after that and he just kept his eyes open. His tongue was enlarged and hung out. Palluq used to make fun of him by hanging his tongue out. Jaikkupuusi was alert enough to understand that he was being made fun of. He wrote a note to the nurses saying he no longer wanted to live. Things didn’t end there though. Palluq got a baby boy whose tongue hung out. His tongue tended to freeze and stick on things when he was outside. He had weird looking eyes. He became the foster child of a qallunaat couple. It was only after he had this child that Palluq realized what he had done. We should not make fun of others. It can be very dangerous.

Does the person who is being made fun of have his feelings hurt?

Aalasi: The person keeps their feelings deep down inside. They could even be dangerous to our grandchildren. We could spend a long time talking about this, as well as about the torturing of animals or dogs.

Jaikku: There are people who have become disabled because they made fun of other people. I know of two persons that happened to personally. One was a child.

Akisu: Even though we are elders now, we were born after our way of life had begun to change. We were born when Inuit had already become aware of God. We have only heard about the old way of life. I used to ask my mother’s mother about the way she lived. I heard much about it from her. I didn’t experience this myself. They had different beliefs back then. We are giving you information but there are other elders who have information as well. What you do not hear from us, you can hear from them.

It is very hard for us to ask questions to elders, since we are usually told that we are not supposed to. Sometimes we are afraid of being reproached.

Jaikku: It is hard to ask questions, even though you want to.

Aalasi: We were advised not to ask questions. I think it was a mistake in a way.
When I tend to ask questions I am never treated nicely. Once I even said, “I like to be answered when I ask something,” I was told, “You call yourself Inuit and yet you do not even understand proper Inuktitut.” I got really angry about that and I replied, “No wonder we do not understand. We are never welcomed when we ask questions.”

Aalasi: Yes. What you are saying is true. We used to be advised against asking questions. In a way it was wrong. We would have had more information to give you if we would have been allowed to ask questions.

Akisu: Although you won’t be using everything you learn here on a daily basis, you still need to be informed. It’s very difficult if you don’t understand something, even if it is just words.

Aalasi: We are really enjoying being here as it is not stressful.

In the past, was animal anatomy used as a guide in understanding human anatomy?

Aalasi: They did not use animals for that.

Jaikku: If people were feeling pain, they would say, “I think there is something wrong with my insides.” They did not say, “I think I have a problem with my liver or my kidneys or my intestines.” It was not hard to tell where the pain was coming from.

Aalasi: They did not talk about their kidneys, intestines or liver. They could tell if they were having stomach problems though. If someone was vomiting and feverish, you could tell they were having stomach problems.

Did people have acne on their faces as we do now?

Aalasi: It was not common. We used to get scabies on our bodies but not on our faces. We didn’t get many pimples back then.

Were the scabies itchy?

Aalasi: Yes. They were very itchy.
What do you think is the most important part of the body?

Aalasi: The brain is very important because it controls everything. What you see and what you hear is controlled by the brain. The fact that you can withstand heat or cold and the fact that you can change what is on your mind, makes me believe that the brain is the most important part of the body.

Have you heard about illnesses that travel to other parts of the body?

Aalasi: Nobody paid any attention to those things.

Jaikku: These days when a person gets sick, we are aware of sickness that travels to other parts of the body. We were not aware of that back then.

Aalasi: Yes, they did not talk about that back then. We knew when a person was terminally ill but we were not aware if an illness was travelling through the body. We didn’t have any instruments to check temperature or pulse back then.

Jaikku: It is only recently that these things started to be used.

Aalasi: Someone who was sick was very well taken care of. The person was kept clean. A sick person was well taken care of right up to the time they died.

Jaikku: A sick person was provided with all the food they asked for. They never thought that it was dangerous to let a sick person eat what they wanted. No one thought that they might get worse if they ate a certain kind of food even if they were terminally ill. Our only concern was to give them what they asked for. Someone would go out hunting for whatever they requested. We would know when a person didn’t have long to live.

Aalasi: Even ptarmigan could improve a person’s health. When it seemed that a person could only get worse, they got better.

Jaikku: Even if they only had a small portion of what they requested it would be helpful.

Aalasi: The juice from the qungulit, the mountain sorrel, is excellent for someone who is sick. My mother used to boil the mountain sorrel and give us the juice. It makes you sweat. That’s why my mother would say it was good for someone who was ill. Seaweed has also been used to help people to recover from an illness.
Is it good for a sick person to sweat?

Aalasi: Yes. It is good. The illness is coming out then, so we like that.

Jaikku: We often get better after sweating.

Have you heard that when a sick person is going to get better, they start yawning?

Aalasi: People used to like it when a sick person yawned and sneezed. When someone started sneezing and yawning it was considered a good sign. I couldn’t sneeze for almost a year after I was sent home after being in the South. I was told that I was not going to recover. I made an effort to go out and collect some small stones as I was looking for something to make myself feel better. I heated up the stones in water, removed them and wrapped them in a cloth. I would lay them on my stomach and sometimes on my back. These plain stones were very helpful to me. We are created from the earth as are the rocks. I was trying to use them to get better. I had heard from my aunt that stones could have healing properties. Quajautit, rock tripe, are also helpful. You have to heat them up first, and then take a spoonful.

What ailment did you use them for?

Aalasi: My aunt said to use them whenever I wasn’t feeling well.

If a person had something visibly wrong with them, for example, if their leg had been amputated, how did you prevent them from getting depressed?

Aalasi: I believe that even if you are missing an arm or a leg, or you have problems with your uterus, you are like that because you were meant to be that way. It is better to have to deal with a missing limb than to be whole and end up in Hell. That is the kind of advice I would give to someone like this who was feeling depressed.

Jaikku: It also helps to open the Bible.

Aalasi: Yes. Reading the Bible can lift your spirits. Having an amputated limb is nothing to worry about. Look at the birds that gather food for their young with only their beaks. Humans are much more capable than birds are. Birds have to make their nests and raise their young just using their beaks.
Are our minds affected by the full moon?

**Jaikku:** It is only recently that we have become aware that the full moon affects people. It seems to be getting worse.

**Aalasi:** The full moon did not seem to affect people back then. It is only now that a lot of people are gathered in one place and we are aware of the effects of the full moon. We knew that it was good to go clam digging at the full moon.

**Jaikku:** We used to be really happy when there was a full moon. Now those of us with health problems are **kangaaqtuq** when there will be a full moon.

What do you mean by kangaaqtuq?

**Jaikku:** It’s something that makes you feel trepidation. We dread the full moon.

**Aalasi:** It is something you aren’t looking forward to.

**Jaikku:** That is what I feel when I see the full moon. When I see it, I say, “Oh the moon is full.” I never used to think about it that way. I used to be happy that there would be clams again.

Did you know any of the whalers?

**Aalasi:** We did not know them.

**Jaikku:** I have only heard of them. My grandmother knew of them. My grandmother used to say that the **maktak** and the meat of bowhead was really tasty.

The reason why I am asking is because I am interested in what type of illnesses they brought when they arrived.

**Jaikku:** I have never heard of any illnesses that the **qallunaat** brought with them when they arrived.

**Aalasi:** It is only after the whalers arrived that the ships started bringing colds. That is all I know. I have never heard of other illnesses being brought prior to that.

**Jaikku:** Even the bones of bowhead whales have disappeared. I think they have been taken away. We used the spinal bone as a pretend clock when we were little children.
Did people try and keep busy to keep their minds off things that were bothering them?

**Aalasi:** Yes. That is the way it was. That is true even today. Even though it is hard, we have to try and talk about what is bothering us. We should talk about our worries rather than trying to ignore them. If we try to keep busy, our worries go away for a while, but they always come back. It helps to keep busy, but it is best to talk to someone you know. That is the best way to deal with problems.

**Can people become sick from worrying too much?**

**Aalasi:** A person can become ill from worrying if they don’t talk about what is bothering them.

**Jaikku:** This is how the healing that takes place today is conducted.

_I have heard that men are different from women because they do not cry very often._

**Jaikku:** Very much so.

_Have you ever heard of people who became sick because they were advised not to cry?_

**Aalasi:** Yes. A person is not supposed to suppress their crying or they will end up sick. Men are different from us. We tend to talk about things but men talk about their emotions less. When it seems that they should be crying, they do not cry at all. They are tougher.

**Jaikku:** Men are tougher in every way. They are not like us at all.

_I have heard that babies long ago were not as strong as babies today. Is this true?_

**Aalasi:** They were not very strong even when they grew older. It seems today as if babies are born being able to hold up their heads almost immediately. Back then even if they were growing they were slow to gain strength.

**Jaikku:** They were like that for a long time.
Aalasi: Today it seems so if babies are born smiling. It is as if the newborns are already able to focus.

Jaikku: Back then, babies did not learn to smile for a long time. We had to say “uuhui” to try and make them smile. Babies wouldn’t smile right away. They would just stare at you. They are not like that today.

Aalasi: We were told that in the future everything would be rush, rush, rush, and that’s the way things are. Even babies grow up more quickly today. We have been told that we would live a fast life like the rest of the world and babies are like that today.

**Uqumangirniq, paralyzing nightmares; and itillimaniq, sleepwalking**

I would like to ask about uqumangirniq, paralyzing nightmares. What should you do when a person is having one?

Jaikku: It is very scary when you have uqumangirniit frequently.

Aalasi: I do not know what you should do for those who are uqumangirniqtut.

Jaikku: If you know that someone is having that type of nightmare, you should wake them up. When there are signs that whoever you are sleeping with is experiencing this, you should wake them up. When you are experiencing this, even when you try to move you cannot.

Do nightmares come from evil?

Aalasi: I do not know. I have never heard that they come from evil. People have always had uqumangirniit.

Have people always had nightmares?

Aalasi: Yes, people have always had nightmares.

Jaikku: Anyone can have a nightmare.

Is it the same as itillimajuq, sleepwalking?

Aalasi: I guess it is similar.
Some people who are sleepwalking do not even know what they are doing.

Aalasi: Sleepwalkers do not know what they are doing when they sleepwalk. We foster parents had a workshop about sleepwalking. It made us better understand why people sleepwalk. Young children and teenagers that sleepwalk are very restless during the day. They sit down for a very short period and then they are up and walking around again. They seem to be searching for something. They are very restless. They do not seem to have any friends. They seem to have very short-term relationships with people. As soon as they fall asleep in the evening, they start sleepwalking. When you tell them to go back to bed, they do, but not long after they are up again. They go back, and then they get up again as though they are scared. If they were afraid the time they were up, the time after that they would be more calm. We were advised to put a damp cold cloth on their chest to wake them up.

Jaikku: Or you could wet your hand and sprinkle water on their face.

Aalasi: Then the person wouldn’t sleepwalk again afterwards. We say they sleepwalk because they are so hyperactive. The real reason they are constantly worried is because their natural parents had mistreated them. All children like to live in a stable home. When children keep coming home to an empty house and their mothers are out, they are unhappy. They store their anger inside and they become very restless. During the day, they don’t feel like playing and they don’t have much of an appetite. They start sleepwalking once they fall asleep. I really understand where they are coming from.

Jaikku: People who often sleepwalk are like that.

Aalasi: People who sleepwalk often and those who rarely do, are different from each other. People who sleepwalk often are worried all the time and don’t know what is going to happen next. They are holding things inside that they cannot talk about. That causes them to sleepwalk. Some even go outside without knowing that they have done so.

Jaikku: Some have the urge to go in the water.

Aalasi: Those who were fearful during the day, or whose parents caused them to worry, would sleepwalk at night. We were told to keep track of when they were sleepwalking to see if were any patterns. We were told to compare children who came from a stable home with those who did not. We were advised to try and treat those from unstable homes better to see if this made a difference.
Jaikku: Do you think this is the way it is?

Aalasi: I really believe this as I have had two foster children who grew up in fear. One is now a teenager and the other one is still a boy. The younger one used to be very busy while he was sleeping. He would do all kinds of things while he was sleepwalking, some of which were dangerous, like going outside. He no longer does this anymore.

Jaikku: Where I come from, they used to say if a person went to sleep with their clothing on, they would sleepwalk. That is all I have heard about sleepwalking. That is what ordinary Inuit have said about this. They did not have an instructor to tell them about sleepwalking but that was what they said about it. Sleepwalking has always occurred. It used to be funny watching a child who was sleepwalking. They seemed to have an urge to go into water. One person even attempted to go into a pail of water. They did not appear to be afraid.

That can happen to adults too when they are worried, although it is more likely that they will talk in their sleep instead.

Aalasi: What I have seen is that if children have been very hyperactive during the day, they tend to sleepwalk.

I had a brother who was like that. Because he could never sit still, the teacher even sent him to the Nursing Station for a check-up.

Aalasi: How is he today?

He doesn’t sleepwalk anymore.

Aalasi: My daughter’s adopted child is like that. I took him for a check-up too.

My brother was very hyperactive. The ones who are very restless, twitch a lot when they sleep.

Aalasi: No wonder! They were hyperactive during the day.

What does nusuvuq mean? Does it mean twitching?

Jaikku: It refers to those who twitch constantly while they sleep, almost like they are running. Once they are asleep, they fall into a deep sleep and twitch nonstop.
Aalasi: Coming out of anesthesia, or if you walked a lot during the day, you tend to twitch a lot too.

*You seem to be in a deeper sleep when that is happening.*

Aalasi: That is how it is.

Perhaps this is because they have a lot on their minds.

Aalasi: Yes. They probably have a lot on their minds.

Have you heard that when someone is having a nightmare, you are not supposed to wake them up because they might be dreaming about something they are trying to come to terms with, such as death. There are different types of nightmares. Some are caused by memories of abuse. The victims can be having nightmares about their former abusers.

Aalasi: They might be having a nightmare about their abuser.

Jaikku: I have never heard of this.

Aalasi: I get scared really easily. I have always been like that.

Jaikku: I do not get scared easily, but I *uqumangiqtuq*, I have paralyzing nightmares. I can tell one is coming by the sound I get in my ears.

Aalasi: I do not know about twitching.

Jaikku: I know about it, but mine are not triggered by anything.

*I have heard that people who have been abused can have blocked memories. The person remembers what happened through dreams. People like this should not be awoken as they are dealing with an unresolved issue. The person might end up dying.*

Jaikku: How can you tell if a person is reliving a memory about being abused in their nightmare?
The person will be able to tell what happened to them after they wake up.

Aalasi: After the nightmare is finished?

The nightmare must be permitted to continue to the end. If the person is mumbling and looks scared, you should not wake them.

Jaikku: I only know of one type of nightmare.

Were those who were prone to having nightmares advised to put a Bible or an ulu or a knife under their pillow?

Aalasi: I have only heard of Bibles being placed under a pillow, not anything sharp.

Jaikku: When I think I am about to have a nightmare, I keep changing my body position. That is how I prevent it from happening.

Aalasi: Bibles are very comforting. They have always been placed under the pillow to help people sleep well and to help prevent them from experiencing uqumangirniq.

I have also heard that some people receive messages in dreams. For example if a deceased person wanted to be named they could appear in a dream and indicate this.

Akisu: Some people receive information through dreams.

Aalasi: Some pregnant women have said they have experienced that.

Some people have dreams about teeth or bears when someone is going to die. Do you believe in that?

Jaikku: We say that a person is qunujaatqutuq if they have a dream that is a sign that someone is going to die soon. They start wondering if they are going to lose a loved one when these signs come to them in dreams.

Akisu: Qunujaatqutuq, and niriujaatqutuq both refer to expecting something to happen, but qunujaatqutuq is an expectation that you dread. Niriujaatqutuq is expecting something good to happen.

Even if the person does not want this to happen, will it happen anyway?

Jaikku: Yes. It is as if they are being warned through the dream.
Are dreams important for the body?

Jaikku: Very much so.

Aalasi: I don’t think they are very important. You should not even pay attention to them. Sometimes they do not mean anything. Some people believe in their dreams to the point that they are the only things they pay attention to. I know that our ancestors received premonitions through dreams, but not all dreams come true.

Jaikku: Some dreams come true. That is why some people say they are qunuaq and niriuaq. It is a good sign if someone is niriuaq because of a dream.

Aalasi: When a baby said uquuq it was a really good sign.

When a baby who couldn’t yet talk well said uquuq, did it mean that his father would be arriving soon?

Aalasi: Yes. That is how it was.

Jaikku: Everyone was really happy when a baby said uquuq.

Aalasi: It was a form of predicting that someone would have a successful hunt.

Did they use an atsaq, a seal humerus, for this purpose as well?

Aalasi: We used an atsaq for this purpose as well. We would attempt to get the bone to stand upright when we tossed it.

Jaikku: It was just a game.

Did only children play it?

Jaikku: We all used to play guessing games with it.

Did people believe in this?

Aalasi: I guess because we wanted it to be true, we tried to believe in it.

Jaikku: There used to be different types of games that we would play and this was one of them.
Remedies for aches and pains

How were people who had a stomach-ache helped?

**Jaikku:** There are many reasons why someone might have a stomach-ache. If you have not had a bowel movement for an extended period of time, you tend to have a stomach-ache. Personally I was not very regular so when I had a bowel movement, I always felt better.

**Aalasi:** There was no particular treatment for a stomach-ache. I mentioned the other day that a rub could be applied to the stomach. That is the only treatment I know of.

**How did you do this?**

**Aalasi:** By placing the inside of a rabbit stomach on the tummy. I learned this from my aunt and my mother. There was no particular medication to cure a stomach-ache. I do not know of anything else you can do.

*Didn’t you have any leavening agents back then like baking powder? I seem to have heard something about them being used for upset stomachs.*

**Jaikku:** We did not use qallunaat methods back then.

*I guess animal and plant remedies were the only things used?*

**Jaikku:** Things from the beach were also used.

**Akisu:** Rabbit lungs were excellent. They could heal your finger if you had an infected nail. Miqqapit, seaweed found in brooks and creeks, were also good at sucking out an infection like this.

**Jaikku:** That could be very painful. Raw lungs could be used on an abscessed boil.

*Coulde they be used for anything else?*

**Akisu:** You could use them for anything that might be infected. They suck the infection out. Just put them on top of the infected part and they will work.

*Do you have to make an incision in the infected part first?*

**Jaikku:** You just apply them and they start working.
Akisu: Seaweed found in brooks and creeks also suck out infection. The anaujaq, the black part along the spine of the fish, can help people who are so dehydrated from food poisoning that they have no saliva. A person can be saved using this.

Can it be used when children have diarrhea so badly they have become jaundiced? Can we use it for that?
Aalasi: It is worth trying. That part of the fish has healing properties.

Were any parts of the caribou used for healing purposes?
Aalasi: The tunnuq, the fat, could be used to light the qulliq.

Was it used for anything else?
Aalasi: I do not know. I have not heard very much about caribou.

Akisu: We were born when there weren’t many caribou around. They weren’t talked about much. Ptarmigan and seaweed also had medicinal properties.

Aalasi: Bearded seal blubber was scraped and used for bandaids. It was chewed and scraped before being applied. The excess oil was scraped off. It was applied while it was damp. You had to make sure it didn’t dry up after you applied it.

Akisu: Bearded seal blubber is the best. It can be scraped and used on major injuries such as gunshots or gaping wounds.

Aalasi: It prevents infection. Lemming skin is also good for this purpose.

Jaikku: It doesn’t dry out the skin. You have to make sure you change the bandaid though, when needed.

When the bandaid was removed, was the infection removed along with it?
Aalasi: Once it was removed the infection was removed along with it. Bearded seal blubber is excellent for removing infection as well. My first husband shot himself in the hand and we could even see bone fragments. We were living where there were no qallunaat at the time. We spent the whole spring and summer out there waiting for the ice to freeze up so we could go where there were qallunaat. The bearded seal oil we applied was even able to remove the bone fragments. His hand was bent the other way.
and some flesh was missing but it healed quite well. Although he was not able to obtain medical attention, his hand healed quite well. We also applied lemming skins. People had to make do with what they had. We didn’t panic when we had a problem like this.

Jaikku: We used whatever was available.

Aalasi: There are leaves that are called alatsaujait.

Akisu: The alatsaujait are thick leaves.

Aalasi: They could be soaked and applied as a band aid.

Did you soak them in water?

Aalasi: You soaked them in water first, and then applied them. They could remove infection too.

Akisu: Uqaujait are young willow leaves. They are green. The small reddish leaves are called alaksaujait in our dialect.

Jaikku: The stiff ones are called atungaujat. They are whitish when they are ripe.

Are they mushrooms?

Aalasi: She is talking about mushrooms. The ones that have a stem, and grow around nests.

Jaikku: They look like they have gills underneath.

They are not puffball mushrooms but they are quite similar.

Jaikku: They are like puffballs, but they have a longer stem.

I think they grow in shady areas. I want to know why we have different names for them.

Jaikku: Pujualutsait are round.

Are pujualutsait different from pujualuit?

Aalasi: Pujualuit have a long stem.
Jaikku: They do not have a long stem. They touch the ground.

Akisu: They appear to touch the ground.

Jaikku: There is always a confusion between *pujualutsait*, *pujualuit* and *atungaujait*.

Aalasi: You can use *isurramuat*, mountain avens, for direction if you are lost on a windy day.

Akisu: After they freeze, they tend to droop from the north to the sea.

Aalasi: That is how you can tell which direction north is.

Akisu: We call *uannaq* the north wind.

Jaikku: The mountain avens looks twisted.

Aalasi: All grasses droop towards the north.

Jaikku: These plants are called mountain avens. They appear to have been twisted.

**Drowning**

*What do we do when someone has fallen in the water and is no longer breathing?*

Aalasi: I was given advice on how to help those who had fallen in the water. My brother-in-law’s late father, Kakkik, and my late aunt told me that if someone fell in the water and was unconscious, you should position them so that they were draped over a rock. You had to make sure the person was facing towards the sea. No one was allowed to walk in front of them. You would just leave them alone and wait for them to come around. These days, everyone seems to rush about trying to get the person to start breathing. Sometimes I even think that there have been fatalities because of this. If you see foam coming out from the corner of the mouth, that means the drowned person is going to start breathing again. It could take up to an hour after the foam appeared before the person would start breathing. If there was foam there was reason for hope. That’s what people used to say.
Jaikku: People could recover even if they had stopped breathing.

Aalasi: The person could recover even if they had stopped breathing. If there was foam at the corners of the mouth, it was a sign that they would recover. When their toes started twitching, you turned them over on to their side so that they could vomit. That is what people used to say.

Would they start breathing on their own?
Aalasi: Once they had vomited out the water they would start breathing on their own.

Jaikku: They would vomit out the water if their bodies had been placed properly on the rock with their head hanging down.

When the foam started coming out, were they not supposed to wipe it off?
Jaikku: You weren’t supposed to wipe it.

No one was allowed to walk in front of the person?
Aalasi: Absolutely not. No one was allowed to walk in front. The person in charge could peek over to see if there was foam coming out, but not walk in front.

Jaikku: My grandfather Putuguk lived to be an old man. He drowned when he was young. He went down to the bottom, and was revived after that. He died much later of old age.

Aalasi: When they attempt to revive a person who has drowned by pressing down on their chests really hard, I think they just damage the heart. I am not saying that the qallunaat way is wrong, it is just the Inuit way worked.

Akisu: If a person has been placed on the rocks properly, the water and even the salt, could be vomited up from the lungs.

What was done with people who were breathing, but were suffering from hypothermia? Did you have to remove the clothing?
Aalasi: Don’t pay attention to the clothing. I heard of two adults though, whose boots had to be removed because they were long.
Those who fell in the water but were still breathing; once they were out of the water, did you just remove their boots without taking them inside?

Jaikku: Once they had started breathing, then you took good care of them. You made sure that they were warm once they started breathing. That is how it was done. They warmed the body.

Aalasi: You gave them a small sip of warm water first.

Didn’t they remove all their clothes and make sure their genitals and other openings were kept warm? Did they lay side by side with the victim to help keep them warm?

Aalasi: They could do that to someone who hadn’t drowned. If someone was just suffering from hypothermia, you had to try and keep them warm. If a person is suffering from hypothermia and they are conscious, they should be lain with and brought to warmth.

Did you remove all their clothing?

Aalasi: Yes. You would remove the clothing.

Akisu: You would warm them up with body heat.

Jaikku: When someone had almost drowned and was suffering from hypothermia, you attempted to get the person warm right away. I have never experienced this first hand but I have heard about it.

This was the way we were. Everything was passed down orally. Inuit did not record information in writing but by passing it down orally. The information that we have is stored in our brains and our hearts. We have not forgotten what we have heard. We are taking about what we have been told.

Aalasi: We would not remember any of this if we hadn’t been living in isolated camps. We did not live a fast life. While my mother would be sewing or when we were eating, she used to talk about how things should be done. We did not ask questions but we heard what was being said. I learned a lot just from listening to my aunt and my sister Mary’s father-in-law, Kakkik, speaking.
Disinfectants and soaps

What was done if someone was losing a lot of blood?

**Aalasi:** If someone had a gunshot wound or fell and had a big cut, you would try to stem the blood flow. When a woman was losing too much blood after giving birth, she was given special care. If someone was losing a lot of blood the ring finger used to be tied. This made a big difference because the ring finger controls blood flow. Once it is tied, the bleeding stops right away if you are having a nosebleed. Gunshot wounds or large cuts would be tied at the affected arm or leg to prevent blood loss.

**Jaikku:** I have lost blood two ways, from a nosebleed and after delivering a baby. I always lost a lot of blood from delivering a child. I used to be fed broth which is good for the blood, as well as water.

**Aalasi:** Seal broth is really good for blood loss. Fish broth is also good.

*If someone had broken their finger on a rock did you tie it first and then apply a bandaid?*

**Aalasi:** If it was cut, the bandaid was applied after the bleeding slowed down. We all peed into a container and the urine was used to soak the wound to stop the bleeding.

**Akisu:** That was done if it was bleeding very heavily. Urine made the wound burn, but it would stop the bleeding if the wound was immersed in urine.

*I guess it is like the disinfectants they use now on large wounds.*

**Aalasi:** Urine was not only used for cuts. It was also used for washing. It is really good for removing stains.

**Akisu:** If the clothing was rinsed properly, you couldn’t even smell the urine.

**Aalasi:** I have seen both urine and eider duck eggs being used as soap.

**Jaikku:** Sealskins that have had fish wrapped in them come out looking bleached.

**Aalasi:** My mother would put the insides of a fish in a parka cover and squish them inside. After she rinsed them out, the parka was really clean. **Nigguq**, the slippery top part on the fish skin, is also good.
Does it look like saliva?

Aalasi: Yes. Nigguq used to work very well. When we were really poor we used it for soap.

Did you ever use polar bear broth for washing?

Aalasi: No, I never did that.

Jaikku: There were never many polar bears. When there were we just wanted to eat them.

I mean the broth left over from boiled meat.

Jaikku: I've never heard of that being used for washing. I just think of it as food. My mother used clay for soap. I would get it from the beach for her. Clay is excellent because it doesn’t have any sand in it.

Aalasi: There are different types of clay.

Jaikku: Yes. Clay from the beach and clay from the land are different. I used to collect clay from the beach for my mother so she could use it for soap. I also collected eggs for her. There was no way eggs would be thrown out. They would be saved for soap. The part of the fish which is saliva-like, was also used for soap.

Aalasi: We spent long periods of time without contact with the qallunaat when we were on the other side of Pangniqtuq. We used to wash our hair with seal blood. It was like shampoo. Once it was rinsed out, the hair was so clean it was glossy.

Did you ever try washing your hair with caribou blood?

Aalasi: We grew up in an area where there was hardly any caribou so I never tried it.

Jaikku: I would think caribou blood would be good because it can be easily removed when it is on cloth. Other animal’s blood is harder to remove. It is not like caribou blood at all.

Was clay used for healing purposes?

Aalasi: My mother used to wrap clay in cloth, heat it and apply it on an ache or pain. She made sure the clay was not too sandy. It was really good for that.
Jaikku: Clay was really useful. I have a supply of clay from Aggauti that I use for cleaning. It is the same type of clay that my mother used. I did the floor recently. It removes stains really easily.

Akisu: The branches from blueberry bushes are really good for removing puja, gummy blubber. It removes what ordinary soaps cannot.

Did you just rub the branches on whatever you wanted to clean?

Akisu: Yes. For example if there was puja inside a pot, it would remove it. It works really well. I have used it often.

Slings, splints, and scalpels

If someone had a broken collar bone, how did you treat it?

Aalasi: They were given slings. I myself have broken my collar bone three times.

Jaikku: The place where I first broke my collar bone is just another joint now because I did not wear a sling. It never completely healed. When I broke my collar bone on the other side, even though there is a slight lump, it healed properly. Collar bones that are broken are treated with a sling. They do not take very long to heal although they are very painful at first.

Young boys tend to be very hyperactive. Were they required to use slings too?

Aalasi: My mother used slings with boys too, so that the bone would not move around. It healed faster that way.

I think if my son ever needed a sling he would take it off, because he is so active. What is the name for a sling?

Aalasi: It is called an ikusimmik because it was worn around the elbow.

Why did people have boils so often back then?

Aalasi: I do not know why. They used to be really big.

Jaikku: Maybe the germs in our skin turn into boils. I think there are fewer now because we have been immunized. I used to have boils very often back then.
Aalasi: Boils used to be cut open with a small sharp blade.

Jaikku: I told you about the incision I had to make once when I was delivering a baby. The blade to cut open a boil was similar to the one I used for that.

Aalasi: We always had a blade like that available for an emergency, even though it wasn’t used on a regular basis. They were small blades, like scalpels. Nail clippers were always kept handy; the same was done with this blade.

What did you apply on the boil?
Aalasi: A lemming skin was used.

Akisu: It was used after you drained the abscess.

Aalasi: The lemming skin pulled out the eye of the boil, the inualua. The only way a boil can heal is if the eye comes out. If it does not come out, the boil tends to reappear elsewhere.

Akisu: The round white eye would pop.

Did you put anything on the lemming skin?
Aalasi: The lemming skin itself was sufficient.

Jaikku: You would wet it a bit before applying it, and it would suck out the abscess.

Jaikku: I had to cut open someone who had an infection on his wrist. I could feel an abscess deep inside so I applied a paste of molasses mixed with Sunlight soap. I put some of that on, and applied a lemming skin as a bandaid to suck up the abscess.

I don’t know if I quite understood. Did you apply the skin side or the fur side of the lemming skin to the abscess?
Aalasi: I applied the skin side. If we ran out we could go to other camp members to get lemming skins because they were kept as supplies. In the same way we keep pills now, we would keep lemming skins for when we needed them.

Would the lemming skin come off itself after the boil started to heal?
Aalasi: The lemming skin was checked regularly to see if the abscess had come up.
Jaikku: When the edge of the lemming skin started to dry up, it was removed and changed.

Aalasi: Just like dressings are changed today.

Jaikku: The thin fur from the stomach area of rabbits was also kept. It was never thrown out. It was saved so that it could be used when needed. The same was true for lemming skins. Lemming skins were excellent for healing wounds. You only stopped applying them when it looked like the wound was completely healed.

*How was pain dealt with before there was medication? Today we take pills for headaches.*

Aalasi: We used a band which we tied on our heads; even that was shared amongst camp members. You could also apply something cold. We have always been aware of that.

Jaikku: If someone had a nosebleed for too long, snow or ice was applied.

Aalasi: The band used to be fetched from my aunt’s place, I remember that very well. Did the headache go away quickly?

Aalasi: Yes, it did not take too long. A person who was sick in bed was well taken care of. We would move them around to make them comfortable and give them whatever they asked for.

Jaikku: If a sick person was no longer eating, we would ask them what they desired and then get them whatever they had requested. If what they had asked for was not available, we would go out and hunt for it. The person would eventually get better. The idea was to get their appetite going.

Aalasi: A sick person was also brought food from nearby camps. People would look for ways to help the sick person feel better. It worked too. A sick person would be taken outside during the spring and summer. Sometimes a tent would be set up for them so they would be in a relaxing atmosphere. Even that helped. They would do anything to make the person feel better. It was very helpful to take them outside for short periods of time when the weather was good.
Jaikku: If a person was sick for an extended period of time, they would make sure they spent some time outside.

Aalasi: They tried different ways to help them feel better. Sometimes their hair would be trimmed. Sometimes they would cut it really short to see if that would make them feel better.

If a person had headaches often, would their hair be cut?
Aalasi: That was also very helpful.

That was done to me when I had frequent headaches. My hair was cut and I wore a band. It seemed to help.
Aalaasi: Yes, those things do make a difference.

Jaikku: I have cut my hair many times. It does seem to work. You feel better afterwards.

Aalasi: There used to be different types of sicknesses that we had to deal with. Back then we didn’t have material to make casts for broken bones. We used dried bearded seal or ringed sealskin. Wood was used if it was available.

Jaikku: You would just make sure whatever you were using was stiff. If there was no wood available, bearded sealskin was the best to use.

Aalasi: The skin would be bound with rope.

Akisu: Inuapik from Iqaluit broke her thigh when she was out sliding and they used pieces of wood as a splint.

Jaikku: That is why she limps slightly.

Would the bearded sealskin be tied on?
Aalasi: Yes, it would be tied on. It would be bound to the leg or to the arm.

Akisu: Inuapik’s sister was sliding with her. She was trying to get her to stand up but she kept on crying. It turned out the bone was broken.

Aalasi: We never thought that a person wouldn’t recover from a broken bone. When we were living outside of Pangniquq there was a person who had fallen and broken his
back, but he hadn’t damaged his spinal cord. A tent pole was bound to his back for support. He was like that for almost a year before he recovered. There was no such thing as x-rays back then. People did not know exactly what had happened to him, but they used a support for his back to keep it straight. He lived for a long time after that.

How did he manage to sleep?

_Aalasi_: He found a way to sleep.

_Jaikku_: They would find a position they were comfortable in to sleep. They were well taken care of.

_Aalasi_: We didn’t have an abundance of household items back then.

_Jaikku_: We did not keep anything that we couldn’t use. All we had was our clothing and our bedding. We would make what we needed.

_Aalasi_: When I was visiting the hospital recently I noticed that the bedding they use looks really uncomfortable. The bed itself is really hard. Back then when a person was sick, caribou bedding was given to them if they did not have enough in their dwelling. The bedding at the hospital should be made more comfortable. I am sure the sick feel worse with that bedding.

_Jaikku_: There are some tenants in our building who are wheelchair-bound. Their chairs have no extra padding. They sit on them day in and day out. My heart really goes out to them.

_Aalasi_: Yes, they are sitting all day on the same seat. It never changes. We used to try and position the sick in a comfortable position.

_They must get tired of having their limbs hanging all the time._

_Aalasi_: Very much so.

_Jaikku_: They do not even have any way to stretch their legs out. The chairs they use day in and day out are just ordinary wheel chairs. Something should to be done about this. Those who cannot walk are forced to remain in the same position all day. They do not even get a chance to stretch their legs.
Aalasi: Broken bones were bound with stiff materials and the bones used to heal. I know of a person who had a spinal injury and a neck injury. When the neck is injured, and the person is no longer able to twist or turn it, it is called tummaqtuq.

Lice

What did they do about lice back then?
Aalasi: I really liked lice. I really miss them, especially the nits.

Jaikku: We used to have a lot of lice.

Aalasi: We had so many lice that my head used to be full of nits.

What did you do to get rid of them?
Aalasi: My head was combed with a fine-tooth comb. After this was done there would be so many lice on the snow that the snow turned black.

You must have been very itchy.
Aalasi: Once I could not sleep at all after I had given birth. I was so itchy, I went for a walk. I was afraid my in-laws would search for the lice. I took my top off as well as my pants and whacked them on solid rock. I was doing this as quickly as I could because it was late at night. I had a good sleep after I did that to my clothing and the lice were gone. After I got rid of the lice I was even told that I didn’t look pale anymore. When I shook my head lice fell out. People who had too many lice lost a lot of blood as their blood was being sucked.
The Importance of Thoughts, Feelings, and Words

Attitudes towards physical disabilities

Jaikku: We were advised not to make fun of anyone, as this could be very dangerous. I used to watch two young people. One boy made fun of people with disabilities. He would pretend to be like them. The other pretended to walk like a person who had a physical disability.

Aalasi: He ended up being like that.

Jaikku: I used to watch the other one making fun of someone walking with a disability. He walks exactly like him now.

My older sister who now lives in Iqaluit gets really hurt when people make fun of her.

Aalasi: She has a problem walking.

I know of two girls who used to make fun of the way others walked and their legs broke at different times.

Aalasi: We are advised not to discriminate against others. We are told to treat everyone as equals and to respect them. If a person has a physical disability, you should think more about their personality and their abilities, not about their disabilities. When you are interacting with them, try and think of positive things that will keep them uplifted. If we make fun of people, the same thing can happen to us, or to our children or to our grandchildren. That is the truth.

Jaikku: There is a middle-aged man in Kinngait who used to make fun of a visiting minister who could not turn his head. He is exactly like him now.

Aalasi: Yes, he has the same disability.

Jaikku: He cannot turn his head without turning his whole body. He looks exactly like the person he used to imitate.
Is the word piusirlunniq used for someone with a disability?

Aalasi: Yes, it has always been used for that.

Jaikku: When I was less than a year old, before I started walking, my leg got infected when my mother was carrying me in her amauti. As well as having me in the amauti, she was also carrying a heavy load on her back when they were walking inland in the summer. Because my leg was positioned improperly, my hip got infected and it affected my leg. Therefore I walk with a limp. My leg was drained by an incision. My mother used to say that I was given a lot of attention when I first started walking because I appeared to walk with a limp. Even though I walked with a limp, I do not recall other children ever making fun of me. I was treated like everybody else. I am really grateful for that, when I think back on it today. I am now elderly and still nobody makes fun of me. My leg never bothered me until recently when my hip started hurting.

Aalasi: People who are made fun of do not say anything even though they are really hurting inside. We have heard that when they are made fun of, they think about this. For example if there was something wrong with my face and Mina made fun of it, even though I was hurt, I would not say anything to Mina. I would only think about it. Just before I died, it would affect her. This has always been known.

There was one man who didn't have any strength in half of his body. The hospital driver used to pick him up as he was unable to get to the hospital himself. He was the type of person who just loved everyone. He had a sickness where he could not hold in his tongue and was always drooling. There was this person who made fun of him. After the man died, the person who had made fun and imitated him had a son who turned out exactly like him.

There was another man who caught a raven in a trap. He tied a rock onto its claw, put it in a bag, and put it in the water. The man who did that was mentally deranged for approximately a year. All he could talk about were the claws. That is all he saw.

What did he do to the raven?

Aalasi: He drowned the raven in the water by tying a rock to its claws. We are advised not to put animals that belong on the land into the water. We are also not supposed to put animal bones in a fire. It is forbidden to put bones in a fire.

Did you say it was forbidden to put animal bones into a fire?

Aalasi: Yes. We were also advised never to put land animal bones into the water. God created the animals and we have to dispose of them properly. Our parents taught us to treat animals with respect as they were given to us for food. That raven sought revenge.
towards the man who had put him in the sea. All this man could talk about were the claws. He was out of his mind for a long time. We have to treat animals, and people who are physically or mentally challenged, with respect. They have very capable minds. If you make fun of them you or your children or your grandchildren could end up like them. It is very risky.

Hurtful words and social withdrawal

I would like to ask if we can become sick through the misbehaviour of others, or through using unkind words?

Aalasi: I understand what you are saying.

Jaikku: If you have been hurt by words, yes.

Aalasi: That is a possibility.

Jaikku: Even though I walk with a limp, I have never been made fun of all my life. I do not recall my peers making fun of me even once. Even though we were quick to get into fights with other children, no child ever mentioned my disability. I have never seen anyone imitating me so I have never been hurt in that way. I would probably have been hurt and ashamed if people made fun of me, even though I would still be up and about. If people had made fun of me, I would have been hurt in my heart.

Aalasi: For example if I said, “That qallunaaq from overseas has one eye that is smaller than the other,” and you heard me, you would be hurt in your heart and yet say nothing. You would wonder why I was making fun of you. You would think, “The same thing could happen to Aalasi or to her child.” That is how things work on earth.

No one with a disability should be made fun of. Rather you have to respect the person and love them. You should not even pay attention to the disability. That is the truth. That is how it should be. I mentioned a person whose mouth drooled and whose tongue hung out. When Jaikkupuusi was down south, Palluq, who now had a child like that, used to make fun of him. Palluq got a son whose tongue was so big it would stick out. The child was sent down south as his tongue kept freezing when he was playing outside. His tongue was so big he could not speak. The father of this child had been making fun of Jaikkupuusi before his child was born. This has always been considered dangerous. We are also not to injure or break a dog’s legs or hurt animals unnecessarily. That is what we were taught by our parents.

The Importance of Thoughts, Feelings, and Words 241
Jaikku: If we are not going to use animals for food, we were advised not to kill them. We were taught not to torture them or taunt them. Animals were given to us for food.

Aalasi: Even if a person has a physical disability, we should not discriminate against them because of that. We should treat them equally so they can have a better life. They become very unhappy if their disability is being made fun of.

Jaikku: Elders should also be respected. Even though they pretend not to notice something, it doesn’t go unnoticed. Even if they do not say it outright, the message is there. It is even more noticeable as you get older.

Aalasi: My cousin works for the housing association. They have to take a lot of wood and other garbage to the dump. My cousin called me one day to seek advice, thinking that I might know more about God’s word than he did. Paulusi, the adopted son of Jiini, was the dog-catcher. My cousin said he had seen him throwing live dogs into a fire. He asked me what I thought about this. Shortly after, Paulusi was burned in a fire.

Jaikku to Aalasi: Did this happen after he had done that?

Aalasi to Jaikku: Yes, he was burned shortly after. We really have to pay attention to our actions.

Jaikku: We have to live our lives properly. We have to make sure that not only we, but our children and spouses are on the right track in life. We were advised never to speak badly about others. My grandmother used to tell me never to speak badly about anyone when my children were listening so they would be good towards others and they would feel comfortable in the presence of others. If my husband was listening, I was also not to speak badly of anyone, so that he would not be uncomfortable in their presence as well. If I spoke badly to him about someone, he might not be himself around that person. We women have to take charge as we are the foundation of our homes. This teaching has been around for a long time.

Aalasi: Is what we are saying making sense to you?

Yes.

Jaikku: What we are talking about not only concerns sickness, it also concerns how life should be lived.
Aalasi: What we are saying needs to be said. You have to learn about more than just sickness.

Jaikku: What we are talking about relates to living a good life. We are passing this information on to you, and you can pass it on to others as well.

*I have heard that some words are very painful.*

Jaikku: Some words are so painful, they don’t merely seem to be words.

Aalasi: They are painful. What you say is true. That is why we told you that you should not talk badly about anyone. Words can shatter lives.

They are like ammunition.

Aalasi: What you say is true. Words can come out quickly like bullets and can be very painful.

Jaikku: Today we hear our young people swearing in English. It is as if they are playing with language when they are angry. It is really not very nice to listen to.

*It is awful to listen to.*

Aalasi: Even grandmothers are spoken to like that.

Jaikku: Young people today even scold the way qallunaat do. Even though they are educated, they use bad language. Sometimes I tell young people that they do not know what they are talking about. The real scolding words are ahaunna and aniqpannamiik.

Aalasi: We should not be using those words either, but they slip out sometimes without thinking. If I said aniqpannamiik to Bernice, it would mean she deserved being punished in a mean way.

Jaikku: Young people do not even know the seriousness of scolding someone anymore. They do not really know the meaning of the words they are using. They do not realize how painful they are, so they go ahead and use bad words.

Aalasi: Well, they have learned how to swear in English from the school system. They are not learning that from us. They are learning that from the school.
Jaikku: Even the serious words that were used for scolding are played around with by young people who use them without really understanding their meaning. They are very powerful and very painful. When you know the meaning behind the words, they are very painful, even though they are just words.

Could you get sick from this?

Aalasi: Yes, words can make a person sick. Words can fill the heart with pain. It is a different type of pain than shock, but it is just as painful to the heart.

To the mind too.

Aalasi: Children are learning a lot of swear words from television. Some adults do not mind if young people swear.

If an elder’s feelings were hurt, was this dangerous?

Aalasi: This was very dangerous. The elder might think of something bad they wanted to happen to the person who hurt them and this could actually occur.

Akisu: We have always been taught to respect elders and speak to them with consideration. Something could happen to you even after the elder had died, if you had been disrespectful. If you had a young child that you worried about when you were sick, they could die before you did if you doubted that anyone would be there to care for them after you died. Either that, or their bones could break. You are not to worry about your child even if you are dying. Do you understand?

Yes. If I knew I was dying and I worried about what would happen to my child after I died, that could happen.

Aalasi: You are not supposed to do that. You have to leave this to God to deal with. You have to think positively and believe that the child will be well taken care of. You need to be thankful that your child will be in good hands. It is better to think like that.

Akisu: The person you were worrying about would constantly be sick after you died, and their bones could even break. In a similar vein, we are not to make fun of those who have physical or mental disabilities, for if we do, this could be revisited on our loved ones after we are gone. The mind is very powerful; especially an elder’s mind. This is a saying that has been passed down to us from generation to generation.
Aalasi: We were not only taught ways to deal with illness, we were also taught ways to keep the mind clean.

Akisu: When the mind is in turmoil, you can have difficulty sleeping and lose your appetite. When you are under stress, the mind can be very powerful. It can even prevent you from sleeping. Even if you try not to be depressed, if you think too much, your mind can become heavy, and you can completely lose your appetite. That is a known fact. Myself, I have personally experienced loss of sleep and loss of appetite. I guess you are all aware that I have lost two children to suicide.

Aalasi: I have heard that Ilaja Naullaq from Pangniqtuuq, who has a limp, is like that because his parents worried too much about him. The mind is very powerful. We should not worry about our children even though we know that we are dying. We have to hand them over to God so he can take care of them. You need to tell yourself that you will no longer be there for the child when you die and accept this. You have to try and have positive thoughts. Do not worry that something bad might happen to them.

Would this be similar to not grieving too much after one of our children died?

Aalasi: Yes. It should be that way no matter what. You should not grieve for anyone you lose for too long. The deceased has a soul. The soul may end up roaming the earth if we grieve for them for too long.

Jaikku: They say if you do this it makes them fall back to earth.

Aalasi: Souls start roaming because a loved one won’t let the deceased go. They are constantly asking for them.

Akisu: The mind is so powerful that it can take over the body.

Can our minds even exercise control over the soul?

Akisu: Yes. For that reason, we are advised to listen to the advice we are given. There is nothing more that we can do. When we don’t let the deceased go, we just make ourselves suffer. Even if we feel hopeless, we have to listen to the advice we are given. We have to try to overcome our grief because if we don’t it can overcome our body. The elders’ minds are very powerful. We are always taught never to give an elder cause for concern. Even after death, an elder’s thoughts may become reality.
Could they cause something bad to happen?

Aalasi: Yes.

Akisu: For example, if you treated your mother or grandmother well throughout life, they could reward you with a good life when they die. If you mistreated them or did not listen to them, they could leave you with a bad life. That is how powerful the mind of an elder is. You are advised to treat the elderly with respect. If you take good care of them, they can leave you with a good life. Even if you felt hopeless, they would leave you with a good life, and with the motivation to continue and prosper. If on the other hand, you had given them cause for worry, your body and your mind would experience the consequences. This is an old saying that is well known.

Aalasi: Some of what we are saying we hear at church. We hear the words every Sunday. Some of these teachings we have learned from the Bible, some in church and some from our elders.

Before people became Christians, they believed that the soul could be made to fall back to earth. If we believe in the teachings we receive seriously, can they be used to help us have a healthier mind and body so that this could be prevented from happening?

Akisu: You have all heard of souls. If my mother or my father or my spouse died, and I really, really wanted to see them, I could wait alone in the house for them to come at night. But they would not show up no matter how much I asked them to come because they are not here on earth. They are up in heaven because of their belief in Jesus. Some souls are not like that though. The soul might roam the earth. The only way it can go to heaven is through belief. Sinners are said to be roaming this earth because they are unable to go up to heaven. These souls can show up if they are requested. We do not know if they are here. Those who want to go to heaven repent and they go to heaven. Even if I wanted to see someone who was in heaven, they cannot come. I have heard about someone who begged God to see a deceased person and the deceased asked why he was being bothered. It was the person’s mind that tugged at the soul to come down. There are those who have gone to heaven because they were believers. Those who are roaming the earth are a foul sight to see. They are very ugly. These are the ones that are said to be heading to hell. Even though we are here in flesh today, we have made a place with God. There is a way through belief to heaven. Even before there were ministers, our forefathers knew that if you believed in the afterlife, you would achieve it.

Aalasi: It is said that they are sometimes seen. You can’t see their eyes.
Akisu: I was told by the Anglican ministers that Catholic priests have to remain single and celibate. I was told in my studies as a lay minister that if they didn’t remain celibate that they would roam the earth carrying their heads after they died.

Aalasi: Priests that didn’t remain celibate would wander the earth after they died because they were not saved.

Akisu: Because they broke their vow of chastity which they had made to God, they were doomed to roam the earth. This happened to some of our forefathers who broke the pitailiniit too. We have the opportunity to go to heaven. When you hear about these things, you may be learning things you did not know before.

Aalasi: You can use what you are learning when you are advising others.

Akisu: We have heard that the past enables us to understand things in the present and in the future. Although there is nothing we can do about a situation, even though it is scary, you need not know about it. Even though there are scary things happening, we should not worry about them. There is a path which a person can follow to be a good person who gets along with others and loves their neighbours. This is the path that we should try and follow. We should not feel that those who are going through rough times are unfortunate, because these things are meant to happen. We have to be aware of what is happening within and around us, so we can be understanding of others. What we are saying may be just words to you now, but they might be able to help you in the future. For example, Aalasi does not want to hurt me physically because she knows that I am stronger than she is, and if I hit back, she would be no match for me. Even if she can’t hurt me physically she can hurt me verbally. You can abuse a person verbally even if you are not doing it physically. We are told to live in harmony with one another.

If we made someone worry, would it affect them physically, as well?

Aalasi: Yes. A person can be affected physically if the person who made them worry didn’t show remorse. If an apology was made and the problem was talked over before the person became affected physically, then nothing would happen to them.

Akisu: If a problem was ignored to the point where it did not seem to exist, and then it was brought up, the person could get hurt all over again. It could make things worse.

Jaikkku: If a person is told the same painful thing over and over again, it can affect the body.
Akisu: If an apology is made, then the person could start to recover.

If we hang on to our hurts and pains from childhood can that affect our bodies physically as well?

Aalasi: Yes. This is bad. If you keep what has hurt you as a child secret, and the person who has caused the pain has not apologized, you can carry this hurt into adulthood. I think this is true for a lot of adults today. Today when we enter into healing, the cause of the pain resurfaces. If the abuser apologizes, and you have a talk with that person, you can be uplifted.

It is only recently that we started hearing about healing. Was that done long ago too?

Aalasi: There was no name for it back then. It was known just as having discussions together. For healing to work you have to start talking about all the hurts and pain from your childhood. You have a wound in your mind and it is painful. You are not healed immediately after you start talking. The wound has to heal by talking and crying first. That is how healing works. Even when a person goes into healing as an adult or as a teenager, ongoing discussions are needed.

Jaikku: Once a person talks about something, they can let it go. Then they can deal with another issue. You can’t deal with all your problems at once. It is too much to deal with everything at once. We are told to take our time and not rush through this process.

Aalasi: One of the reasons why some mothers mistreat their children is because the victimization they went through themselves is constantly on their minds, even though they want to treat their children well.

Were you permitted to cry in front of children? Even though someone hasn’t died, we feel like crying sometimes.

Aalasi: We should try not to expose children to that if they are too young to understand.

Jaikku: Children should not grow up in an environment where the parents are unhappy. It is different if the mother is crying because of abuse. I grew up watching my mother grieve for her children long after they had died. It was a very unhappy situation. It was very hard to watch her because she was not eating well, and she was very unhappy. Being a child, it was very painful to watch her go through that when nobody was abusing her physically.
Aalasi: Very young children should not be exposed to bad role models. This should never happen. We have said before that we women were not to expose our flesh in front of the children. If we really felt like crying, we should temporarily remove ourselves from our children and go cry somewhere else where we feel comfortable.

Jaikku: We were advised never to cry alone outside.

Do you think we need to learn this information in order to have a strong mind and a resilient body?

Aalasi: You have to learn about this even though it does not concern physical illness. What we are talking about can also destroy our bodies.

What was done for those who were constantly sighing? I have heard that a person is worrying too much when they sigh a lot.

Aalasi: A person who is constantly sighing has a lot on their mind.

What was done to help them?

Jaikku: They could help themselves by starting to talk about their problem if they had a heavy heart. They might be sighing because they were not talking about what was on their mind. If they started opening up, even if this was just a tiny bit at first, it could lead to full disclosure. The sighing would eventually stop as the sadness left. This is how I understand it.

Aalasi: I used to be mistreated by my in-laws all the time because I could not really make anything, and I could not clean meat or skins. Those were the reasons why my in-laws did not like me. Your grandmother’s father Arnaquq visited our place as we lived in the same camp. He said that I seemed to be sighing a lot. Later, he asked your mother to visit me. Your mother came shortly after and told me that her father had said I was sighing a lot and that he wanted her to visit to see what was bothering me. We used to be very fearful back then, and I did not want to tell her why I was sighing, but she was very helpful.

Akisu: Aalasi was worried about her in-laws and her inability to do things. She would listen to them talking about her. She would worry about this and it hurt her. She went through this experience herself so she knows what it is like.
Aalasi: Your great-grandfather was very understanding. He always tried to help people in need.

Akisu: What she is saying is the truth. She was very worried that her in-laws had no confidence in her. Having a negative attitude can limit your ability. For example if I kept saying you couldn’t do something, even thought it did not bother you at first, eventually you would stop trying to do it. That is the way it happens. You can become discouraged by the negative things your hear.

Is that the reason why we have to constantly praise our children?

Aalasi: What a child hears is going to lead him through life.

Akisu: You really have to make an effort to be positive around children, especially mothers. Even if what they are doing is not perfect, you should still be proud of them. It makes them really happy. If I keep saying you can’t do something, you start worrying about it and it will affect your goals in life. You will stop trying. We can only keep on trying if we receive praise. Even if someone is not perfect, they can get better. Even if we have negative thoughts about our ability to do something, our minds can overcome those thoughts with praise.

Sometimes it is hard and scary to ask elders questions. They say, “I do not understand what you are saying because you are not speaking proper Inuktitut.” That is quite painful. I guess even elders have experienced this.

Jaikku: Yes, we have had those feelings too.

Aalasi: There are a lot of people who have felt pain from elders’ words.

Akisu: People are put down because they cannot say things properly, or they are told that they cannot speak Inuktitut. They should not be spoken to in that manner.

Aalasi: Her great-grandfather told me something that was very useful. He often visited our place. I had just given birth to a son for the first time although prior to that I had given birth to a baby that had died. He came and talked to me. What he told me still has an impact on me today. He advised me to show my children a good stable home from the time they started doing things on their own, to the time they could play outside, to the time they were teenagers, to the time that they had spouses. If I did this, they would like going home to me and they would respect me. But if they came home at night and I wasn’t home, they would hide their pain in their heart. Children are part of your flesh.
so you have to respect them. You should try and be home for them all the time unless you have an emergency to attend to. That is what he told me. This advice is still useful today. There was an evangelist who came to Iqaluit. He said the same thing. It is good that you are willing to learn how to discriminate the good from the bad.

*You are teaching us a lot.*

Akisu: You in turn are teaching us a lot.

Aalasi: Yes, we are learning a lot of things from you too. You are not the only ones learning.

Jaikku: You are helping us to remember.

Aalasi: We have a better idea about what we should teach. It makes us realize what young people today want to learn.

Jaikku: We are talking to you about things that we would not ordinarily speak of, things we just think about in our hearts, both good and bad. It makes us feel a lot better. This is how we are supposed to help one another.

*I understand now that words mean a lot to Inuit.*

Aalasi: Words have always been cleansing. Words are what has made us Inuit. Words are very important.

Jaikku: We are grateful when we are approached by people who need information. It is very rewarding when what we are saying is obviously appreciated.

Aalasi: They say that those who are hurt, let out a sob when they die. You should remember this when you deal with someone who has just died.

Akisu: They are said to be *manijjuagtuaq*, sobbing.

Jaikku: They do this when they are taking their last breath. Because these people were hurt emotionally, they were affected physically to the point where they ended up dying.

Akisu: For example if I was constantly berating you, this would cause you pain. That pain could cause you to *manijjuag*. As you are dying you could be sobbing, and people would know that you had been deeply hurt.
Jaikku: Sometimes I find myself sighing even though no one has done or said anything to me, and I ask myself why I am sighing. You can sigh without any obvious trigger as you get more elderly. As you get older you are more sensitive to things, even to just casual words.

After children have been crying for a long time, they have trouble catching their breath. Is that what you mean by manijjugaqtuq?

All: Yes.

Jaikku: A child starts doing this after they start calming down after crying a lot. It has always been like that and will continue to be. There are some things that are not going to change.

What is the meaning of the word avvutisimajuq?

Aalasi: A person who is avvutisimajuq is a person who used to have friends, but who no longer does. They no longer participate in things. They might have gone to school but they no longer do. It is someone who people used to talk to but no longer do. The cause of this withdrawal could be rooted in their childhood.

Should those with disabilities be treated with the same care as elders and children?

Aalasi: Yes. Everybody should be concerned about them. They need to be well taken care of. Those with physical disabilities should not be made to worry.

Jaikku: Those who are mentally challenged are more aware of the true nature of a person than we are.

Aalasi: They seem to remember certain things better than we do.

Jaikku: They are more aware of people around them than we are.

Aalasi: They can even read our body language. They know if someone is genuinely friendly. I am sure you see the homeless people hanging around in the store all day. They start hanging around outside the store on warmer days. These are the people who you really need to care about.
Jaikku: The ones who hang out outside the store do not really have a home. They seem to be avutisimajut.

Aalasi: They watch people. They have a lot on their minds. I have never had a lot of money myself. Even though I have lived here a long time, and I am always running out of money, I have always made an effort to give these people money for coffee. I try and give them money so they can put some food in their stomachs. I know that God will reward me in his own way. What I hand over to them may seem small, but to them it is very big and it brings joy to their hearts. They start feeling less isolated because they are so grateful.

Akisu: Even if you just look their way and smile, they know you care.

Jaikku: When someone speaks to you, or looks at you face to face, this is always uplifting. It is good for the mind and the body. A person feels better if they are given unexpected attention. Even one kind word, can make a big difference. When young children say, "Jaikkuungai, Hi Jaikku," I am most grateful to them.

Aalasi: You really need to understand that you have to lead a good life. I used to spend the nights at the hospital with a man who was an adult, although not a young man anymore. This happened four or five years ago. He made me realize that we have to be more aware of how we live our life. Miaji Piita and I used to stay with him because there was no one else to sit with him even though he was from here. He had been sick for a long time. After spending time with him, I really wanted to live a better life.

Shortly before he died he became delirious. He started talking about the things he had done but which he had no power to remove. Death was imminent. He was delirious and was going through a very hard time. He was making axing motions at his wife who was not there. He kept shouting at her to go and get some money. He was acting as though his breathing tube was a bottle of alcohol. He kept taking invisible money out from under his pillow. He kept asking for someone to go and pick up something for him.

During his life he was constantly hitting others, gambling all night, looking for bingo money, calling around looking for his wife and leaving his wife outside. He had done all these terrible things but there was nothing he could do about them. He was strapped onto his bed. He was all bones because he had lost so much weight. He was still very strong though, even though he was in that condition. He received his strength from Satan. He needed to talk about all these things he had done before he became delirious but he did not. Once he became delirious, he started reliving the things he had done. Everything he had done here on earth became visible in his delirium. He finally lost his strength and died. As he was dying, he was rambling on about where he was...
headed. He said three ladders had fallen down that he could have used if he had repented. He kept ranting against the ministers and the church. He was saying that Jesus didn’t exist and asking why the ministers lied about this. He was totally devastated and destroyed in the end because he hadn’t repented. This made me want to give my life to God. This man was always out in the evenings. He was never home. He was just concerned with stealing.

I have heard that some mothers who are married and raising children have secrets that they are ashamed to talk about. They end up getting physically sick even though the doctors cannot find anything wrong with them.

Aalasi: Yes, I have been through that many times. What she said earlier about persons keeping secrets from their childhood because they are ashamed or embarrassed and not talking about them is true. If the perpetrator has also never apologized or talked about this, it is only when he recognizes where the burden he carries comes from, that he can start to get better. What you have just said is really true. Some people repeatedly go to the hospital and yet no one can find anything wrong with them. They are given all types of medication which apparently are of no use. It is best if the person talks out their problems.

Jaikku: It is very heavy when you have a lot on your mind and you are not sure how to talk about it.

If a woman tried to hold in what was bothering her, could something happen to her children?

Aalasi: Yes, that could happen. She could pass the problem on to her children.

Were there two or three people identified in a camp that were available if a person needed to speak to someone?

Aalasi: Even now there are people who can be approached. If a person finds someone easy to talk to, they go back to see them because the person helps them feel better. There are some people that are requested even in the middle of the night. A person who is trustworthy is often requested. It is as if a person feels physically better after talking to someone they trust.

Jaikku: My mother was a person that people would approach with their problems. She was unable to walk. I knew that she was often visited by people who needed someone
to talk to. They would seek her advice. She would be fetched by boat at times from other camps. Even in the winter, people would come and get her. I used to travel with my mother when she was requested.

Did people pray for those who offered advice and support? When I tried to help at the court, my father prayed for me so that I would not be affected by anything that was said to me.

Jaikku: Yes, of course. There were people that would seek advice from my mother and she would provide it. There were some people who had lived a bad life, and changed for the better. Once they had found a better way to live, it is as if they left their bad life behind. I do not think one can totally leave a bad life behind, but a person could live a better life afterwards. There are not too many people that you can seek advice from. The ones that were approached knew how to keep a confidence. Even though I was a child, when people told things to my mother, I kept the stories to myself. My mother died after we moved here so she did not help many people in this area.

Perhaps because your mother was unable to walk she used helping others as a way to keep herself meaningfully occupied; or maybe people came to talk to her because they knew she was able to keep a confidence.

Jaikku: Yes. Back then there weren’t many Bibles, but my mother used to read the one she had access to. My mother used to read it from cover to cover as she could not walk and didn’t have much else to do. People that are often approached by others do not talk about what they hear.

We can sense when people are welcoming. Has it always been like that?

Jaikku: It has always been like that. There are people who are very welcoming. It is easy to listen to them when they speak as well. Some people think they are different from others but they are not. You think to yourself, “They are like me. They have gone through what I have gone through.”

Although it wasn’t part of my job I sometimes gave advice to those I worked with. Although I wanted to take training in this area, since it was not part of my job description I wasn’t allowed to do so.

Aalasi: Yes. It is as if we have rules about everything now. We did not live by following rules. It seems as if the rules today are just in the way.
Do the unikkaaqtuat, the old stories, contain information about leading a good life too?

Jaikku: They are very useful, even though they just seem to be stories.

Aalasi: We did not listen to unikkaaqtuat growing up. It was only when I moved here that I started hearing them. My parents advised me against listening to stories so I do not know very much about them.

Jaikku: There are two kinds of unikkaaqtuat; ones that are just fictional tales and stories, and ones that are based on real events. The first type is just made up, the other is based on real life and ways of doing things. Some of the fictional stories have some truth mixed in them.

Aalasi: Right now we are telling you stories about things that have really happened that are pertinent to living a good life. We are telling you these things so that they can be developed into teaching materials.

Jaikku: Some unikkaaqtuat are used for entertainment. We learned them from each other when we were young, as well as from our parents. We would teach each other the key phrases from the stories.

Uqaujjigiarutiit, advice on living a good life

Do you think it is true or just a saying that if a family member is sick we are not supposed to pretend to cry?

Aalasi: We used to be advised not to pretend to cry if someone was sick or they might die.

Jaikku: I believe that is the truth. I know that personally. Children are not supposed to pretend to cry. If they did so, someone would die soon. They were not supposed to do that.

Aalasi: If children were doing that, you had to slap them in order to make them stop.

Jaikku: You had to make them have a reason to cry.

Is it true that you were advised against carrying rock babies?

Aalasi: I used to scrape my back from carrying rocks as babies.

Jaikku: I would hit the back of my head trying to remove rock babies.
Aalasi: I used to scrape my back because there was nothing to wrap the rock in. When we were traveling by dogteam I hid my rock doll and brought it along. It broke when my mother put it down suddenly. She scolded me for carrying it. We used to use rocks for dolls.

Were you told not to use rocks for dolls or you would get a baby that was really heavy?

Jaikku: We weren’t advised not to do this.

Aalasi: I do not remember if we were advised against doing this or not. I remember that babies were not allowed to hold the tasiqut, the stretching tool, or else they might grow up to be liars. I do not remember being advised against playing with rock dolls though. It is different from one community to the other.

Jaikku: We all used rocks as babies.

Aalasi: We even used puppies for babies. We used to carry them in our amauti as we had no other dolls.

You didn’t have any real babies to carry around?

Aalasi: Parents were reluctant to let us carry what few babies there were, although we were occasionally allowed to carry them on our backs. There was always a scarcity of babies.

Jaikku: Sometimes during the spring, a number of people in the camp would go out, and we girls would go around visiting and ask to carry babies. We would act as messengers for our friends and ask if they could carry the baby. It used to be a lot of fun carrying babies.

Aalasi: Today, it seems you can only get help if you pay for it, even if you are related. This stops people from helping each other. It used to be a lot of fun helping people. We did not think of getting paid back then.

Jaikku: There was a scarcity of people to help.

Aalasi: Back then we were really willing to help with anything: softening skins, fetching ice, fueling the lamp. Today, people only help if they are going to get paid. This has destroyed people’s willingness to help.
Jaikku: All people think about today is money.

Aalasi: Yes, the only help we get today is help you have to pay for. It is very difficult when you need help.

Were you advised not to sleep over at another place or your father’s big toe would follow you?

Aalasi: Our father’s toe would get restless. I really believe this saying. We were also told not to fall asleep with our clothing on in case an unseen being would play with our insides.

Were you told not to wash your face before going to bed or someone might kiss you while you slept?

Jaikku: I haven’t heard that.

Aalasi: Naujuk’s family keeps the traditions alive. Because she is from that family, she has a lot of knowledge. Akpalialuk and Naujuk, who used to live across the bay, were very knowledgeable.

We used to be advised not to wash our face before going to bed or a tuurnqaq, a shaman’s spiritual helper, might come and kiss us while we slept.

Jaikku: Back then, we used to use puppies for our dolls. We would make the dogs pee as if they were our babies. We would touch their penises and the dogs would end up peeing. We would not even wash up after and yet we never got sick.

Did you learn anything from playing dolls with puppies and rocks?

Aalasi: Yes. It was a way to learn parenting skills. We would practice making clothing and kamiik for inuujait, little dolls. That was how we learned, playing with dolls and playing house.

Were you advised to watch what you ate to make sure you didn’t eat maggots, to ensure that you didn’t gain weight?

Aalasi: I have heard that you can gain weight from eating maggots. There is no way I can eat them. I ended up in the hospital once because I was afraid of a maggot. I fainted when I saw a maggot, while I was eating mattaaq. Maggots are like ghosts for me. I really fear them.
Didn’t you see it moving?

Aalasi: I wasn’t paying attention and my mother was out. My father was blind. We had a visitor, and my father asked if there was any meat. There was some mattaaq on the floor so we ate with the visitor. Someone saw a maggot on me and I fainted. I only regained consciousness in the hospital.

I have heard that you can gain weight from eating them.

Aalasi: They used to say that you could gain weight from eating them. I have heard of maggots in aged cached meat being so numerous that you could hear them swarming. People scooped them up and ate them.

Where did they come from?

Jaikku: They are everywhere.

Aalasi: I heard about some people who survived by eating maggots from old meat caches. I heard that story on television. They just ate them raw.

Did they eat them because they were hungry?

Aalasi: Yes. They ate them because they didn’t have any food.
Introduction

The information contained in this chapter was gathered by the students in the course during an additional week-long session in 1998 with Malaija Papatsie and Jaikku Pitseolak, two elders from Iqaluit who discussed the medicinal uses of plants. Although this second course was slightly different from the first, it was still oriented towards health and well-being. As the reader can note, the various uses of plants were partly discussed by the elders in the preceding chapters.

Despite low temperatures, strong winds and brief summers, there are more than 200 species in the Arctic from flowering plants to algae. Elders emphasized the fact that in seasons where it has snowed a lot, plants grow faster and blossom easily.

As there was not enough time to talk about every species in a systematic way, the elders focussed on the major plants used in traditional medicine; some of them are still being used today.

Even though this chapter is not based on a systematic Inuit taxonomy (see Dritsas, 1986, for a proposal), the content was organized according to Inuit perspectives, hence the division of the text into six parts:

• Mosses, lichens, and plants growing on the ground
• Grasses
• Shrubs and trees
• Berries
• Flowering plants
• Algae

As no extensive research could be done during this short period, the information published here does not pretend to be complete. Nevertheless, the information provided by Malaija and Jaikku generated great interest among the students. Due to the constraints involved in taping oral interactions in an outdoor setting, we did not reproduce all the verbal exchanges between the participants. We have opted for a different format in which each plant mentioned and discussed will briefly be presented.
We are thankful to Dr. Andrus Voitk who, while a surgeon at the Baffin Regional Hospital in Iqaluit, took many pictures of plants which he has generously allowed us to reproduce. We would also like to thank Dr. Susan Aiken and her colleagues at the Canadian Museum of Nature in Ottawa who very graciously answered our questions and provided us with photographs we were having difficulty locating. We would also like to thank Jane Tagak, an educator in Iqaluit, who has a penchant for plants, and who provided the basic background for this chapter and photographs for this book. Lin Maus was also kind enough to lend us many books on plants from her private collection. Thanks are also due to John McDonald, from the Nunavut Research Institute in Iglulik, and to Eva Aariak, the Language Commissioner for Nunavut, for helping us with some dialect differences in Inuktitut relating to plants. To facilitate a comparative perspective, we have also integrated a few observations from other Arctic regions, especially Western Alaska (Oswalt, 1957; Lantis, 1959; Ager and Ager, 1980), Nunavik (Qumaq, 1988, Blondeau, 1996) and Greenland (Foersom, Kapel and Svarre, 1997, etc. See references). We would also like to thank Gwen Coffin, from Qikiqtani Educational Services, for her help in this chapter.

The elders’ extensive knowledge regarding anatomy and plants is self-evident. The information they provided illustrates the richness of Inuit intellectual heritage.

**Mosses, lichens, and plants growing on the ground**

*Quajautit (Plate 1)*

Rock tripe. *Umibilidad*. *Quajautit* are found on solid rock; the word could be related to something slippery underfoot because they become slippery when wet. *Quajautit* are eaten by caribou, *tuktuup niqingit*. *Quajautit* are black with a curly edge. They absorb blood when used for cleaning a wound and also pull out the eye of a boil. A spoonful of the liquid after they have been boiled is good for any sickness. They are not supposed to be eaten though. They can also be used to absorb the oil from the dried skins of baby seals.

**Jaikku:** There used to be a lot of *quajautit* but today I do not see them as often. There used to be a lot of them but our land is changing. Some people said the *quajautit* would become extinct because our environment is becoming polluted. In fact I hardly ever see them anymore. Rock tripe can be used to dry things up. After it has been raining, rock tripe become bigger. Whenever there has not been any rain for a long time, they become smaller; it is obvious that rock tripe on the bed rock get bigger after it had rained a lot. They could be used to heal boils.
PLATE 1 – Rock Tripe

Quajautit
PLATE 7 – Arctic Cotton

Pualunnguat / Kanguujat
PLATE 8 – Arctic Bell Heather

PLATE 9 – Bistort

PLATE 10 – Purple Saxifrage
PLATE 25 - Prickly Saxifrage / Kakilanaat / Tiinninguat / A’asaat
Nirnait (PLATE 3)

Caribou lichen. *Cladonia stellaris*. Caribou lichen can be found on the soil, in swampy areas and at the edge of the sea. They are yellowish in colour. According to Aalasi Joamie, they were used to cure eye infections. They were also boiled until the water turned black and used as a tea for the sick, according to Aalasi and to the information recorded by Dritsas in Iglulik. When the tea turned black you waited for it to cool it and drank it. Caribou lichen are known primarily as caribou food, but they are also known to be appreciated by bees. Having a strong smell they are not eaten by humans, but the liquid is good after being boiled. Some elders find it is the best medicine when they feel sick. In Alaska, this lichen was added as flavouring to fresh fish or duck soup. (Oswalt, 1957: 21).

According to Jaikku Pitseolak, who is originally from Kinngait, the word *nirnait* is used for the flower which grows on the prickly saxifrage. In Greenland, the term *nirnat kakillarnaasaq* is used for prickly saxifrage (*Saxifraga tricuspidata*).

Malaija: For me the word *nirnait* does not refer to a part of the prickly saxifrage. The *nirnait* growing on soil are white or yellow. I only call those *nirnait*.

Jaikku: We eat the white flower which is on the tip. It tastes sweet. We call this *nirnait*. We usually eat the flowers on the tips of the prickly saxifrage.

Tingaujait (PLATE 4)

Caribou moss. *Alectoria ochrileuca*. Also known as Greenbeard or Blackbeard. *Tingaujait* means “what looks like pubic hair”. They are found on the ground. They are known to be water resistant and very effective for starting an open fire when dry. They are eaten by caribou (young caribou like them very much) and by other animals.

Jaikku: I used to collect *tingaujait* a lot. When we were young girls, we used to stay up late and make a fire. We would put oil on a flat rock and then the meat. That is how we used to cook. The food used to have a delicious taste. You can also cover the meat with another flat rock to cook it. I used to do this often.

Malaija: Although I come from another community, we did the same.

Siqpiijautit (PLATE 2)

Club moss. *Lycopodium annotinum*. *Siqpiijautit* means “that which is used to remove *siqpik*” (discharge from the inner corner of the eye). *Siqpiijautit* are found on sites where it takes the snow cover a long time to melt, such as mossy north-exposed rocks. They are
yellow and look like hands. As their name suggests they are used to remove discharge from the eyes. When they are ripe they feel really soft. Some elders have stated that they are intoxicants.

**Malaija:** People can die from eating plants. If eaten in great quantities blackberries can get stuck in the intestines and not move down. I do not know of any other plant which can cause death. Before alcohol and drugs arrived here, I think I got drunk from drinking the liquid from a plant when I was a child. I became intoxicated. I think I got drunk, but I’m not really sure because I’ve never drunk alcohol. I think I got drunk from the liquid from boiled *siqqiijautit*, the plant that looks like hands and which sticks out from the ground. *Siqqiijautit* are yellow. Someone in our camp boiled them, and after I had drunk some I couldn’t even move. That is the only time that I have ever been drunk. I could not get up at all, I was just lying there. I was so dizzy I could not get up.

_Then I shall look for it!_

**Malaija:** I have never wanted to talk about it before, but now I can say that people used to get drunk in the past on this before there were *qallunaat*.

**Jaikku:** People say that they consider *siqqiijautit* as an intoxicating substance. She is not the only one who has said this. I have heard other people telling similar stories.

**Malaija:** Once when we were children we stayed up late. The oldest person in our group boiled some plants over a fire at night. He made this brew. He gave us some and we drank it. After that I lay down and couldn’t get up for quite a while. I was mentally aware of my surroundings but whenever I moved, I became really dizzy. When I tried to get up, I would just fall forward. I think that we were drunk. Even after quite some time had passed, I could not get up. Those plants are intoxicating substances.

**Jaikku:** People say they are like that.

**Malaija:** It makes you feel really light when you become able to move; that is when the light feeling begins. You feel as if you are not touching the ground at all. It really makes you feel light on your feet. People were holding me down because I wanted to walk around. I felt as if I had no bones at all. I have no further recollections after the effects wore off.

**Jaikku:** You got drunk before those of us who do drink had ever even heard of alcohol!
Malaija: I was really the first one to get drunk. I often wondered if that was how alcohol affected the body. I have never drunk alcohol but I think that is how it must feel. I felt really scared after. Although I did not get caught, I thought my parents were going to find out that we had been drinking this brew and be angry. People used to make tea from many different kinds of plants but this was the only plant that induced drunkenness. I only drank a little of this black liquid.

Jaikku: The water was black?

Malaija: Yes, it was very dark and murky. The pot that was used to boil plants was a very large tea kettle. It was completely full. The plants were boiled over a fire before we drank them.

Maniq (Plate 5)

Lamp moss, *Dicranum elongatum* or *Sphagnum girgensohnii*? in Western taxonomy. Lamp moss is found on flat ground. It is collected in the spring and summer and laid out to dry. It is circular in nature. Lamp moss is very important. It can be used to help stop diarrhea. Swallowing a small amount eases the feeling of having eaten too much fat. It is also good for heartburn. In a non-medical context it can be used as lamp wick. Mixed with willow cotton it is called *marguli*. Being harder and more dense than other types of moss, lamp moss is considered the best moss for wicks. Clumps of maniq that grow in swampy areas are called *niaquttait* which means “shaped like a head”. In some areas of the Arctic it was also used on the bottom of sled runners before they were coated with ice, as insulation for sod houses, and to help make a caribou stomach hold its shape when it was being made into a container.

Jaikku: Good lamp moss is difficult to find. When you step on it it feels hard. When it has grown long it is good lamp moss. I used to collect it. My grandmother told me to step on it to see if it was hard. That was the best way to determine the quality.

Malaija: There are different kinds of lamp moss. Some of it seems to be veined. Lamp moss is good for wicks even if it is not hard.

Jaikku: The lamp moss was crumbled into pieces. We would make holes with a nail in a tin can and use that to crumble it. After that, we would crumble the seed heads of the willows to remove the seeds. Then we would mix the two together. When I am invited to meetings and asked to light my *qulliq*, I use willow cotton and lamp moss after mixing them together. That is how I do it.
Malaija: We would collect the lamp moss during the summer and leave it to dry. When it was time to pick the willow cotton we would also pick up the lamp moss which we had left to dry.

Pujualuit (PLATE 6)
Puffball. Calvatia cretacea. Pujualuit means “dust, or powder”. Pujualuit found on the tundra were picked up in the fall and stored for winter between sheets of paper. They were also kept in Bibles. They look like small sacs and can be smoky in colour. When mature they are filled with brown powder. They prevent scarring when applied directly. Pujualuit are considered to be good when the inner part is spread on the wound. Besides being very good for wounds and cuts, they are also used for other skin problems such as boils and rashes. They are considered to have haemostatic qualities (they stop bleeding). They can also reduce the bad effects of having eaten too much fat when they are chewed and swallowed. They can also be used as wicks. Before the plants dry, they are called pujualutsait. Some people keep pujualuit in their homes to treat skin problems, cuts and minor wounds instead of having to go to the pharmacy or the Health Centre.

Jaikku: When you cut out a hole on the top in the centre, it looks like flour, but is not white, it is brown. If someone had a cut, it was used to stop the bleeding. The powder contained inside the plant was used for healing.

Can the outer skin be used as a bandaid?
Jaikku: Yes, the outer skin can be used as a bandaid. Just cover the cut with the inner part against the skin.

Malaija: If the outer part is used against the skin, it does not stick as much.

Grasses
Iviksugait
Low-lying plants with long stems and blades. According to Jaikku, the general name for grass is ivit. Classified among the Gramineae or Poacea (Elymus arenarius). Iviksukat can be found at the edge of water in well-drained gravel and sand beach ridges. After iviksugait begin to wither, they are often made into baskets in Nunavik and woven into mats. In Alaska (Ager and Ager 1980: 34) they are used for tote bags and ropes for hanging herring and other fishes.
Pualunnguat / Kanguujat (Plate 7)
Arctic cotton or cotton grass is found in swampy areas. Eriophorum scheuchzeri. The term pualunnguat is used in South Baffin and means “imitation mittens”. Kumaksiutinnguat is the name given to this plant in Kinngait. It means “an imitation object to remove lice”. The term kanguujait is used in North Baffin and means “what looks like snow geese”, as a field of them looks similar to a flock of snow geese that has landed. They are used for lamp wick, sometimes mixed with moss. According to Tununirmiut, they can be used alone for lamp wicks but they are not the first choice for a wick because they crush easily. In Western Alaska (Oswalt, 1957: 28) the stems were sometimes gathered during the summer, dried, and used for boot insoles. According to Jaikku and Malaija, pualunnguat can be mixed with rancid seal fat to relieve aches and pains. Fresh shoots can be eaten; they taste sweet when chewed. Pualunnguat can also be used as swabs.

Sapangarannguat (Plate 9)
Bistort. Polygonum viviparum. The Inuktitut word means “imitation small beads”; bulbets when green are used as beads. This tuber is edible; according to Jaikku and Malaija, bistort rhizomes are called uqpigait. They are thick and they have leaves when fully grown. In Alaska, the roots are eaten raw in summer (Lantis, 1959: 59).

Shrubs and trees
Suputiit (Plate 12)
Willow. Classified among Salicaceae in Western taxonomy (Salix). Suputiit are called suputitsait before the cotton grows. Suputiit mean “taken away by the wind” or “lighter”. They are found on rocky hills and in swampy areas near lakes and rivers. Around September they begin to be blown away by the wind. When they fall off they look like snow. They were collected in the fall if a woman was known to be pregnant. The puffy seed heads were pounded and shaken to remove stems and other impurities from the cotton. Suputiit have a haemostatic quality (they stop bleeding). The cotton can be used to heal and dry the umbilical cord. Suputiit are known to promote rapid healing. They can relieve indigestion from too much fat intake when they are swallowed in small amounts. They can also relieve diarrhea and cure cuts around the cuticle area, which were more frequent in the past. Suputiit can be mixed with moss for wicks for the qulliq. They could also be used to make a caribou stomach hold its shape when it was being dried for use as a container.
I was wondering about something. In the old days, when you were preparing for winter, would you pre-mix the moss and the cotton or would you keep them separate and mix them together only when you needed them?

Malaija: I would put them in different bags. They would be mixed together in the fall. I used to collect willow cotton and moss and put them into different bags. I would mix them right before I used them. I no longer use a qulliq. That is why I don’t have to gather much willow cotton or moss anymore.

When you were not using it where would you store it?

Malaija: When I collected willow cotton I would put it in a flour sack. I would pick the amount I needed for winter use. I would put it somewhere safe and would pick it up later. After the willow cotton became mature during the summer, I would pick enough to last the winter as I was not going to be able to pick it later on.

Jaikku: I would like to add something. While we were gathering Arctic bell heather for gammaq insulation, we also gathered lamp moss. We would gather enough to last through the winter. We left the lamp moss to dry and we would go back for it later. We had to leave it for quite a while on the land. After we picked up the plants that we had left to dry, and had finished insulating the gammaq, we would put the lamp moss in a place where we would leave it for the winter. If we wanted to use some, we would mix willow cotton and lamp moss together. We would crumble the lamp moss with a shredder made from the lid of a tin can that had had holes poked through it with a nail.

Malaija: I used my finger nails to crumble the lamp moss.

Jaikku: I would crumble the whole piece of moss, and then the willow cotton. After, I would mix them together so it would be ready if I needed it. When I put it into the tin can, I added some oil to it so it would be easier to use. When I was about to use it as lamp wick, I would remove some of the old wick first, and then place the new lamp wick on the qulliq. Even though the men always took a Coleman stove with them, they would also take a qulliq and some pre-mixed lamp wick. Women prepared this for their husbands when they were getting ready to go out hunting, or were going travelling.
Tomorrow at the qammaq we shall see how this is done.

Jaikku: Even though we did not need a lot of willow cotton and lamp moss we would have to collect enough to last the winter. If we ran out of lamp wick, an ikpiarjurajak, a burlap sack, could be used by cutting it with scissors and putting it straight onto the qulliq.

Malaija: We used that as a substitute for lamp wick only after qallunaat arrived. Iparat could also be substituted for lamp moss if it was added to willow cotton. I know that people used it as a substitute for lamp moss when there was nothing else available.

Jaikku: When I swallowed some oil while chewing seal fat to make oil for the qulliq and I felt uncomfortable, I would just swallow a little of the mixture of lamp moss and willow cotton.

Malaija: I never had that uncomfortable feeling you get when you have swallowed too much fat.

Jaikku: Willows were delicious to eat when they had itsi, juice in them. I would eat the plants when they started to mature. They tasted sweet when you chewed them. Willows are delicious. The cotton develops on them when they are dying.

Quarait (PLATE 11)
Net veined willow. Salix reticulata. Quarait grow on humus and around blackberry patches. They are green and quite small. They seem to stick to the ground. Sometimes there are worms on the stem. Quarait are delicious when eaten raw. They need to be chopped or chewed to remove the itsi, the juice. They could be boiled in water to make a brew for an upset stomach. They could be mixed with paunnat, dwarf fireweed. By the beginning of October, the quarait are gone. According to Aalasi Joamie, they are found in shady areas. Some birds build their nests near them. They can be used as bandaids and are also delicious to drink as tea.

Jaikku: Net veined willow leaves look like the leaves of other willow plants. There are tiny white worms that grow in the base of the catkins.

Do you eat the worms along with the plant?
Jaikku: Yes. Those plants have a lot of worms.
Malaija: The worms don’t start growing until the plant is mature.

Jaikku: I used to eat a lot of net veined willows.

Did you always have to look for worms?

Jaikku: No. The worms don’t make you sick.

Malaija: Not all of the net veined willows had worms.

Jaikku: When the worms grew, they ate their way out of the catkins of the plant.

I didn’t know that they grew around blackberries.

Malaija: Yes. They grow among blackberries.

**Avaalaqiat / Napaaqturalaat; little trees (PLATE 20)**

Dwarf birch. *Betula glandulosa*. According to Naujamiut, the Inuit from Upernavik, in West Greenland, the word *avaalaqiat* is related to *avaaq* “back of the head” (Le Mouël, 1978: 87). They are used for cooking and for bedding in the Kivalliq area (Paillet, 1973), and in Nunavik (Taamusi Qumaq 1988: 164). They were also used to make fishing spears, *kakivait*. They are found on dry tundra and steep-banked shorelines. The seeds are winged for dispersal by the wind. Young branches have whitish resinous glands.

**Qijuktaaqpait [Baffin] mamaittuqutiit [Nunavik] (PLATE 21)**

Labrador tea. *Ledum palustre decumbens*. *Qijuktaaqpait* means “a large amount of fuel for a fire”. They look similar to Arctic bell heather, but they are somewhat bigger and have a stronger smell. They are used to treat toothaches and eye disorders. Labrador tea can heal canker sores in the mouth if you place the leaves on them. The stems and leaves could also be boiled for tea and used to treat sore throats. In various places in Western Alaska (Anderson, 1939: 715) and on Nelson Island they were used to treat upset stomachs and as a treatment “for those who spit blood” (Ager and Ager, 1980: 37). They are also known to moisten very dry hands.
**Itsutit / qijuktaat (PLATE 8)**

Arctic bell heather. *Cassiope tetragona*. Itsutit are also called *qijuktaat*, “fuel for the fire”, because they are used for this purpose. *Qijuktaat* means “wood fetched”. They are evergreens and can be found growing low to the ground. They have tiny needle-like leaves and small bell-shaped light coloured flowers. The stems and leaves are used to make fires in the summer. According to Malaija and Jaikku, a large number of them could be wrapped and sewn inside caribou skins and used as a float or a raft that was tippy, but did not sink. They were also used to dry an *arrarusiq*, a bag made out of the small stomach of a caribou, and as bed mats. They were also used to insulate the roofs of *qammait*.

**Jaikku:** An *arrarusiq* would be stuffed with Arctic bell heather while it was drying. Some humus was also added to stretch the bag. Once dried, they would remove the Arctic bell heather and use the bag to store lamp moss or sinew.

**Malaija:** They put the Arctic bell heather inside the caribou stomach in order to dry it. My mother sewed a piece of material around the dried caribou stomach which she used as a *marnguti*.

**What is a marnguti?**

**Malaija:** A *marnguti* is a container used to hold *maniq*, lamp moss and *suputit*, willow cotton. It was made up of a mixture of willow cotton and lamp moss to be used as wicks used for the *qulliq*. I learned to make this from my mother.

**Berries**

**Paurngait (PLATE 13)**

Crowberries. *Empetrum nigrum*. Often called “blackberries”. The word *paurngait* means “which looks like *pauq*” because they are black in colour like *pauq*, soot. They are very healthy to eat, and can be harvested at the end of the summer. They are crunchy and juicy. The word *paurngachatit* is used for crowberry patches. (The addition of -*qutit* is used to name a specific plant producing a specific kind of fruit.) Crowberries can cause constipation when eaten in excess and can be fattening if mixed with seal fat. They are delicious when mixed with caribou fat. Today *paurngait* are also eaten as jam. In another context, the branches with their needles attached were used to clean gun barrels. Crowberry branches made nice mattresses for *igluit*. In Alaska, large numbers of crowberries were picked in late summer and stored in seal oil for use in fall and winter (Ager and Ager, 1980: 37).
Jaikku: Crowberries look delicious when they are big and ripe at this time of year in late August and early September. As the weather gets colder, crowberries and other berries start to freeze on the ground. When it starts melting again, berries from the year before become visible. You can even eat them then.

Are all plants edible or are some of them poisonous?
Malaija: I don’t ever remember being told not to eat certain plants. I don’t eat the ones I don’t like.

Jaikku: We were just told not to eat too many plants or we would get a stomach-ache.

Malaija: I’ve heard that you can die from eating too many crowberries. You can get really constipated. My brother’s child died because he got so constipated from eating crowberries. Even though berries tasted delicious, we were told not to eat too many of them.

Jaikku: Dwarf fireweed, crowberries and purple saxifrage can be really fattening when you eat them with seal fat.

Malaija: My brother’s child is the only case I know of, of someone dying from eating plants. The berries get stuck in the intestines and cannot move down. I do not know of other plants that people can die from eating.

Jaikku: I didn’t know that crowberries could be cooked until we first came here to Iqaluit. This was in 1953 at a time when people here were well off. That was when I discovered that they could be boiled.

Was this called augujjiaq?
Malaija: Augujjiaq refers to picking berries with a bowl with holes in it to drain the snow out. We used the bowl as a filter. We would dig into the snow, and put the berries into the bowl. That is how we used to do it.

Weren’t the berries dried up?
Malaija: They were not dried up. They were just like ones that had been stored during the winter. When I was with my husband’s family, after we had gathered berries we would store them for the winter. My mother-in-law would make a hole in the sand and would pour in some fat and wait for the fat to dry. After it had dried, she would put in
the berries and cover it with a sealskin. After she had covered it, she buried it for our winter supply. I learned how to do this from her. I did not learn this from my mother but from my mother-in-law. Berries buried like this kept very fresh.

They didn’t spoil?

Malaija: Only the top would spoil. The inner part did not spoil at all.

Jaikku: When the fat is frozen, it does not go rancid. It is only when fat is raw that it can go bad.

Malaija: My mother only gathered what she needed. She gathered small amounts of berries because she didn’t want to take what she wouldn’t use. Even when there were a lot of berries, she would only gather what she could use.

Jaikku: Back in those days, there was no other means to store berries.

Kigutangirnait (Plate 14)

Blueberries. **Vaccinium uliginosum.** Blueberries grow on low humid tundra and on high and exposed rocky hills. **Kigutangiraqutit** is the word for a blueberry bush, which is often shortened to **naqutit.** An unripened blueberry is called a **nanuq,** “a polar bear.” **Kigutangirnait** means “that which causes teeth to be removed” because they leave black spots on the teeth. Today they are also made into jam. In the past, they were added to bearberries when there were not enough for tea. Blueberries are also used widely in Alaska (Oswalt, 1957: 25). The branches were used to remove **puja,** gummy blubber, and other stains that ordinary soap could not remove.

Kallat (Plate 15)

Bearberries. **Arctostaphylos rubra.** A plant which grows low on the ground and has reddish berries which are eaten by animals, especially bears. Although the berries are edible they have a bitter taste. **Kallaqutit** is the word for a bearberry patch. According to Jaikku and Malaija, some of the patches do not have any berries. The bushes make very strong and tasty tea, which is stronger than the tea made from the prickly saxifrage. The bushes do not taste at all like mature bearberries. The soil needs to be removed before the bushes are used for tea. It is said that the berries are fattening when mixed with seal fat.

Aqpiit (Plate 16)

Cloudberries. **Rubus chamaemorus.** Also known as baked apple berries in Labrador. They grow on dry tundra and in wet areas near rivers. They have berries that are crunchy in
the spring when they are red, and juicy in late summer when they are yellow and ripe. They can be eaten fresh, or frozen to be eaten during the winter. When they are fresh they represent a major source of Vitamin C (Oswalt, 1957: 23; Ager and Ager, 1980: 36). They have many different names in their different stages of development. They are known as aqqiqtut before the berry forms; aqpiksait during the spring before they turn red, and aqpit during the summer. The stems and leaves of the cloudberry are called aqpinnuqitut, aqpiqitut, nakait.

Kimminait (PLATE 18)
Cranberries. Vaccinium vitis-idaea. Kimminait are evergreens that grow low on the ground in bogs and near rivers. They also grow on dry tundra. They are often found near moss. The ripe red berries are slightly acidic but tasty. They are very healthy and the leaves can be used to make tea. Today kimminait are also used to make jam.

Flowering plants
Malikkaat / Isurramuat (PLATE 19)
Mountain avens. Dryas integrifolia. The word malikkaat is used in Pangniqtuuq while isuqtanguat is used in Kinngait. According to their etymology, these plants are called malikkaat because they follow the seasons. The word isurramuat refers to the fact that they follow the path of the sun. They are found on windswept ridges and on dry heaths. These plants indicate the seasons: when summer is coming they fold out in one direction, and when winter is coming they fold in and twist in the other direction.

Jaikku: Here in Iqaluit the sun rises and sets in the same spot for three days in June.

Malaija: At this time of year they are pale yellow because they are dying, but when they are growing they are a deeper yellow.

Jaikku: Mountain avens follow the seasons. In the spring they twist inwards. They start twisting outwards in mid-summer and by fall they have totally opened up.

Qunguliit (PLATE 17)
Mountain sorrel. Oxyria digyna. Found on slopes, snow-patches, in damp crevices and other areas that are not too dry. According to the Igloolik they often grow where birds nest (Dritsas, 1986: 65). They can ease stomach-aches caused by too much fat intake. Because of their sour taste they are called sernaqq in Greenland. According to Jaikku and Malaija, as the plants grow, they lose their tangy taste and become sweet. They taste sweet after being boiled in water and can be used to treat those with low
energy. This brew was used to make people sweat. When the leaves are chewed for a long time and the isi, the juice, is gone, they become difficult to swallow. On St. Lawrence Island in Alaska the sour leaves of the qunguliit are used to satisfy thirst when there is no fresh water available (Young and Hall, 1969: 46). In Nunavik and Greenland qunguliit are also much appreciated. Consumed after meals, they are an aid to digestion (Blondeau, 1996: 44).

**Paunnat (PLATE 23)**

Dwarf fireweed. *Epilobium latifolium*. Also known as broad-leaved willow herb. They are found in moist tundra, in sandy places in rocks, in screes and on heaths. *Paunnat* have big reddish-purple flowers which make them highly visible. They are delicious when mixed with crowberries, blood and oil. The leaves can be eaten raw or mixed with fat. *Paunnat* are good for indigestion. They can also be used as tea. The long seed pod is also edible before it becomes woody. Other uses include fuel for fires and insulation for qammait. In Greenland the dwarf fireweed is called *niviaqsiaq*, “young girl”, and is considered as the national flower.

Malaija: I mix mature dwarf fireweed with blood and oil, and I eat them.

Jaikku: I just eat them raw.

Malaija: They are delicious when you mix them with crowberries. They have the consistency of ptarmigan droppings when they are mixed. They are good after you have chewed them well.

**Airaq (PLATE 22)**

Yellow oxytrope. *Oxytropis maydelliana*. The roots of this plant, the airait, are long edible roots that can be eaten raw. They have a sweet taste. The roots are yellowish or greenish when they are young. When they are older they are brownish in colour and more fibrous. They are good for stomach-aches. According to Jaikku and Aalasi airait were sucked by babies being carried in amautit. Because the babies liked the isi, it would help them fall asleep easily. The part of the root between the bottom of the stem and the root is called the tuqtaq. The root of the yellow oxytrope is quite large. The yellow flower is eaten by geese.

**Aupilattunnguat (PLATE 10)**

Purple saxifrage. *Saxifraga oppositifolia*. These plants grow in moist rocky areas, on cliffs and on exposed tundra. Etymologically *aupilattunnguat* means “resembling something
red”. They are the first flower to come out in the spring. Sometimes they are found among blueberry patches. They have small reddish-purple blossoms, which are very tasty especially when eaten with seal blubber. Bees are often found around them. The leaves can be used as tea.

**Maliksuagait (PLATE 24)**

Seabeach sandwort. *Honckenya Peploides*. According to Aalasi Joamie, *maliksuagait* are to be found on gravel and sandy soils near the beach. According to Jaiku’s grandmother, ones found near the beach grow close to, but not in, muddy areas. They are green in colour. Seabeach sandworts are known to have excellent medicinal properties. They need to be rinsed to remove the sand. They are also known as “beach greens” on Nelson Island in Alaska. The succulent leaves and stems can be boiled and eaten with seal oil. The plants should be collected before they flower in early summer (Ager and Ager, 1980: 35).

**Igutsat niqingit (PLATE 27)**

Arctic poppy. *Papaver radicatum*. The word *igutsat* means “bumblebees”. The Arctic poppy grows on soil. Their yellow flowers are much appreciated by bees. That is why they are also called *igutsait niqingit* “bumblebee food”. The long olive-green stem is quite fuzzy. The Arctic poppy was chosen as the territorial flower of Nunavut.

**Malaija:** Bumblebees appreciate *siirnauitit*, nectar.

**Jaikku:** They gather food for their future offspring from these flowers. Bees can usually be found around the Arctic poppy, the purple saxifrage and caribou lichen.

**Kakillarnat / Tiinnguat / A’asaat (PLATE 25)**

Prickly saxifrage. *Saxifraga tricuspidata*. This plant grows on moist soil on the tundra. *Kakillarnat* means “that which causes prickly feelings” (root *kaki*—“to prick”). *Tiinnguat* means “tea substitute”. *A’asaat* might be an onomatopoeia referring to the sound a person would make if they were pricked “a’aa,” “ouch”. *Kakillarnat* grow in circular clumps. Their thorny leaves are chewable and taste like regular tea. The little white flowers are edible. Other uses include mattresses for puppies so that the pads on their paws would harden so they would be less susceptible to limp when on sea ice.

**Algae**

**Qiqquat (PLATE 28)**

Arctic kelp. *Laminaria solidungula*. In Inuktitut they are described as *tariup piqutingit* “sea belongings”. *Qiqquat* are said to be very rich and can cause stomach-aches. There is an
old saying which states you must not use them as toy whips, for to do so will cause windy weather, *qiqquarnut ipiraqtuqattariaqanngilatit anuraalirnarmata*. Seaweed can be harvested all year long. They can heal small cuts which are not healing properly.

**Jaikku:** There are different kinds of seaweed.

**Malaija:** The kelp that causes stomach-aches is found in the current. There is a smaller one that is a delicacy when the ice has recently broken up in the spring.

**Iquutit (PLATE 26)**

Rockweed. *Fucus vesiculosus*. *Iquutit* means “what is used to wipe one’s anus”. The same name is used in Greenland, *equutit*. They are used to cure stomach-aches caused by diarrhea. According to Iglulingmiut when the leaves are put in boiling water or soup, they turn green instantly (Dritsas, 1986: 65). On Nelson Island in Alaska, they are gathered from the rocks they are attached to during low tide in the spring, when the air bladders have not yet formed.

*I would like to know how the rockweed got its name.*

**Jaikku:** The only people who could tell you this for sure are the ones who named them. It is a very old name. It is said that when some people were down at low tide they did not have anything to wipe their bottoms with. One of them wiped his anus with rockweed and that is how it got its name.

**Jaikku:** People say that males were not to wipe their anuses with a rock. If they did so, the sea mammals that they caught would sink.

**Malaija:** Yes. Men were told not to wipe their buttocks with rocks.

**Jaikku:** Men who lost an animal because it sank in the water were teased about having wiped their buttocks with rocks.

**Additional lexicon related to plants**

*Amaaq:* willow root. The woody willow root is called *qiat* or *amaap silappianga*.

*Agajait:* very thin and soft grasses found in rivers or the sea which look like hair. Could be used as a bandaid for a cut on the hand.
Avvuqtuq: [North Baffin] to collect berries and other edible plants. *Nunivattuq* [South Baffin].

*Isaaratuaq*: branch (thinner stems on a shrub that grow out from the thick main stem); branches are also called *tigartuaat*.

*Kilirnaq*: blade of grass.

*Mannguq*: root or any part of a plant growing underground.

*Maniraq*: ground; related to plants growing close to the ground, but also to rocks, soil and sand on the surface or below the surface.

*Natirnaq*: flat ground where some plants are found; it can also refer to a valley.

*Nakak*: stem. *Attati* also refers to a stem, but it is usually thicker than a *nakak*. In Nunavik the word *qimirluk*, spine, is used for stem.

*Niuluk*: root of a plant (see also *amaaq*).

*Nunivattuq*: [South Baffin] to collect berries or other edible plants. *Avvuqtuq* [North Baffin].

*Pannaq*: dry tree; good fire wood.

*Piluit*: inner parts of certain roots; also the dye and seeds of avens.

*Piruqtuliriniq*: botany (the study of plants).

*Piruqtuit*: plants of the land (plants grown by *qallunaat* are called *piruqsiat*).

*Piruqsiat*: house plants.

*Pituinnariaqaliqtut*: fully grown mature berries that are ready to be used or eaten.

*Qasilinnait*: The name children gave to a certain plant that burned when they tasted it. Its leaves have bumps on them.

*Qungasiqpait*: seaweed stem; the word refers to its long neck.
Siirnauti: nectar of a flower.

Tuttut: The sweet part of a root.

Tuukuumajuq: to store plants for winter use.

Uqaujait: young willow leaves that are small and reddish.

Uqaujakutaat: willow leaves of taller plants.

Uqaujavaat: net veined willow leaves.

Uqpigait: willow branches.

Uqpit: willows.

**Nunaup manningit, earth eggs**

Malaija: Earth eggs are white with blackish spots.

Jaikku: My father cracked an earth egg once, and there was a small caribou foetus inside. I remember that it was white and had just begun to grow. The eggs on the land are the earth’s eggs. When there are eggs along the beach they are the ocean’s eggs.

**What happens when the eggs are cracked?**

Malaija: The weather becomes bad for a long time.

Jaikku: That is what happened when my father cracked an egg. The visibility became really poor and it was really windy.

**What if someone accidently cracked an egg?**

Jaikku: Nobody cracks them on purpose. I once cracked an egg which was on the beach. When I saw it, I tried to pick it up. It just cracked a little in the middle, I said to myself, “This is an earth egg.” This was on the tidal flats during the summer. After the egg cracked, I wouldn’t dare touch it again. When I told my father, Qummuattuq, he looked at it and said, “The weather will turn bad now. That is what happens when they crack.” The water had been calm but then a backwash occurred. When the eggs are really cracked, the weather turns very bad. The egg did not really crack; it only cracked a little. The egg was white and had reddish spots. I got to find out about earth eggs personally.
We always hear on the radio that we are not to break earth eggs. When this happens, the weather becomes bad because the egg is the earth’s child and because the earth cares about it. That is why the weather becomes bad for a long time.

Does anyone know how the earth lays an egg?

Jaikku: The same way as the earth has plants.

Malaija: The egg belongs to the earth. If the egg is new, the earth becomes furious when anyone handles it. Just as we love our children, it is the same for the earth. It gets furious by creating wind whenever the egg is cracked or whenever the egg is handled. The eggs become animals, not plants. It has always been like that.

Does the earth have a lot of eggs?

Malaija: I do not think that there are very many. They are not close to each other and people only see them once in a long while.

The eggs are not laid in clutches?

Jaikku: Although ducks and seagulls lay many eggs, the earth only hatches one at a time. There are no nests. We are told not to handle them. There isn’t a mother bird to protect them. Their mother is the earth. Earth eggs are only found once in a long while.

Footnotes

1 See also the story collected by Marie-Lucie Uvilliuq in Interviewing the Elders, Volume 1, Introduction to the Oral Traditions. pp. 92-93.
A student asked if in the past shamans used plants when practising their art. Malaija Papatsie and Jaikku Pitseolak said that they were not fully aware of such practices, but they did want to remind the students of a few points concerning shamanism; angakkuuniq was presented as a most serious issue. The elders stressed the importance of confession, a practice that is still today considered crucial in healing. In the past, angakkuit helped the Inuit in various ways: they not only practised sakaniq, a shaman calling his helping spirits; and took responsibility for holding ritual ceremonies in the qaggiq, the communal house where people met and also played; but they also saved lives, cured sick people and predicted the future. Elders also emphasised the great abilities of the angakkuit, as they were able, with the help of aarnguat, amulets, to make the roaming spirits of the dead, the tupilait, go away:

The angakkuit used to kill tupilait. My mother said when they went to a place where tupilait had been killed there would be blood everywhere, although there were no bodily remains. My mother said people used aarnguat to prevent tupilait from entering a dwelling. The aarnguat prevented them from entering (Malaija Papatsie).

Elders stressed the fact that angakkuuniq was also very useful to hunters, as angakkuit were able to influence the weather:

When the weather was windy, the angakkuit would put their hand up through the stove pipe, grab the wind, and using a sawing motion cut the strength of the wind if the wind had been blowing too long and wouldn’t let up. After having cut the strength of the wind there was great calm. When they did this, this was called nukinnaqtut. That’s what my grandmother said. I think she was an angakkuq (Malaija Papatsie).

**Naalauttajiiit, those predicting the future**

Jaikku: Noah Piugaattuk talked on the radio about angakkuit and the traditional way of life. The angakkuit were also called naalauttajiiit because they were able to predict future events a long time ago when the earth was still new. Some angakkuit made people confess the wrongdoings they committed against others. They also healed sick people,
and through the use of their *tuurngait* were able to find out things people were trying to hide. Today people who are ignorant about shamanism say to those they dislike, “You are an *angakkuq*! Are you an *angakkuq*?” That is what people say when they are against somebody. They say this even though they are not really sure that it is true. The *angakkuit* were real. I have heard people who lived in those times tell stories about *angakkuit* they saw personally.

Did the *angakkuit* use plants too?

**Jaikku:** Probably. In those days, *angakkuit* had different kinds of *tuurngait* as helpers. My mother said that Aqsatunnguaq, who used to be an *angakkuq*, had spirit helpers that were kelp. He said that they were really pleasant to have as helpers. Aqsatunnguaq used to tell a lot of stories to my mother. *Angakkuit* in those days had different kinds of spirit helpers.

There were many small camps. Whenever somebody was hurt, people probably informed each other. If someone knew that another camp had plants available, did they go and get some?

**Jaikku:** Probably. The *angakkuit* saved lives and cured sick people. As women were linked to many situations, people paid more attention to them. When women tried to hide something they were not supposed to have done, the *angakkuit* used to bring the secret out by making them confess. Whenever women were hiding something, this would make the animals disappear. For example, if a child ate something that they were not allowed to eat, the *angakkuit* would make them confess by telling them that they were not to have any secrets. When my grandmother was a young girl, people did not know anything about God, so they did these things that are not acceptable today. She said that she lived through the days of the *angakkuit*. Noah Piugaattuk told stories about that, and Aupiliaarjuk from Kangiqṣinnguaq also talked about the traditional way of life. He sang songs while elders were setting up a tent during a health retreat. He sang three songs while drum-dancing. We watched him while we were formed in a circle around him. We were out on the land in a very beautiful place. The women wore white *amautiit* and the men wore white parkas. He sang three of his own *pisiiit*, songs, while drum-dancing. It was nice to listen to that. Even though someone is not an *angakkuq*, they can make their own songs.

**Tupilait, lost souls**

**Malaija:** The *angakkuit* would get rid of *tupilait*. I think the *tupilait* were the spirits of the dead.

**Jaikku:** They did get rid of them.
Malaija: My mother said that they used to do that. She attended those ceremonies more than once.

Jaikku: My grandmother did that too.

Malaija: My mother told us that people placed a wooden cross on the outside of the door if they were going to go after *tupilait*. They put the cross up and they called it an *aarnguaq*, an amulet. They hung it on the outside of the door. They did that so the *tupilait* would not be able to come in. They circled the *qammaq* looking for *tupilait*. While they did this, they would hear the footsteps of the *tupilait* that were fleeing and looking for a way to get in. The sound of *tupilait* footsteps sounded like the sound of *pauktuutit*, drying pegs, being tapped together. Because my mother babysat an *angakkuq*’s child, she knew about this. While an *angakkuq* was going after a *tupilait* the people would try to be very quiet. They would leave only a tiny flame burning in the *qulliq* and they would have to have their eyes closed. My mother would try to sit there with her eyes closed but whenever she heard *tupilait* footsteps she would run to the back of the *qammaq* with great speed trying to flee the *tupilaq*. The *tupilait* were the souls of those who couldn’t ascend.

Jaikku: Were the *tupilait* souls who were roaming around?

Malaija: When the weather was windy, the *angakkuit* would put their hand up through the stove pipe, grab the wind, and using a sawing motion cut the strength of the wind, if the wind had been blowing too long and wouldn’t let up. After having cut the strength of the wind there was great calm. When they did this, this was called *nukinniaqtut*. That’s what my grandmother said. I think she was an *angakkuq*.

The *angakkuit* would be tied up. My mother was told by either her mother or grandmother to keep her eyes closed. Whenever she would open her eyes her grandmother would grab her and tell her to close her eyes. She wanted to see what was going on. She saw a man all tied up who was unable to untie himself.

Jaikku: Was he tied with a rope?

Malaija: The rope was wound around him. My mother tried to open her eyes when she wanted to look, but her grandmother would tell her to cover them. The person was covered by a blanket and they put rocks on top of the blanket. I think the person who this was being done to was an *angakkuq*. The next thing my mother saw was the person...
who had been covered coming through the entrance. He was no longer tied up or
covered with a blanket. Even though that person had been put at the back of the
dwelling and had been tied up and covered, he entered through the front door.

The angakkuit used to kill tupilait. My mother said when they went to a place where
Tupilait had been killed there would be blood everywhere, although there were no bodily
remains. My mother said people used a aarrguat to prevent tupilait from entering a
dwelling. The aarrguat stopped them from entering.

Jaikku: Those people were true angakkuit.

Seeking a longer life
Jaikku: Nutaraaluk told stories like that too.

Malaija: In the qilaniq ritual, the angakkuq would straighten out his leg, and a rope
would be tied around the ankle. People would try to lift the leg but were unable to do
so. It was as if the leg was stuck. There would be a lot of people present but they would
be unable to lift the leg.

Jaikku: I have heard a little about that too, from my grandmother.

Malaija: They were unable to lift the leg. I think when my grandmother was doing this
she was committing a deception. She said when her leg was unable to be lifted she was
afraid that she would no longer be able to have the use of her leg. She said that although
there seemed to be feeling in her leg, it couldn’t be lifted, so she would try to move it. It
was very heavy and then it became very light.

Jaikku: What was it that made the leg heavy?

Malaija: The people were trying to lift the leg. They were trying to find out how long
my grandmother would live. The more difficult it was to lift the leg the longer the
person would live. That is what my mother used to say. She too had the qilaniq ritual
performed on her, even on her head. My mother told me these things when I was a child.

Sakaniq, a shaman calling for his helping spirits
Is practicing sakaniq part of shamanism?
Jaikku: When an angakkuq was asking for his tuurngait, his spirit helpers, to come, they
said he was sakajuq. He chanted while he did this. That is how he asked for his tuurngait.
Sakajuq is the same as tuurngajuq. People still know these words today even though this
ritual is no longer practised. Because everyone has heard that angakkuit did that in the past, some people today ask, “Are you summoning your helpers, sakaliqqiit? Are you asking your spirits to come and help you, tuurngiviit? Are you an angakkuq, angakkuuviit?” People say these things today, but in a ridiculing manner.

Malaija: The angakkuit were very real back then.

Jaikku: People say those things now because there are no longer any angakkuit. Do you think that they were pretending they were real? What I’ve told you is the truth. Only people who do not know how powerful the angakkuit were make fun and dare to say: “Are you an angakkuq, angakkuuviit? Are you sure that you are not an angakkuq?” Today, people say this quite often. In those days, people did not dare say that. It was out of the question.

Malaija: People were scared of angakkuit.

Jaikku: They were not pretending at all. People used to be scared of them. But I am talking too much right now.

We are eager to listen to what we do not know about.

Jaikku: You have heard about things that are no longer being followed anymore. People used to gather in a big iglu called a qaggiq.

Qaggilutit, gathering in the ceremonial house

Malaija: They would qaggilutit. This means that people would be gathering, celebrating and playing games in a qaggiq.

Jaikku: They played games when people from different camps gathered in one place. When the adults danced, the men would be in a line on one side and the women on the other. They slowly walked towards each other. When they met, the men would kiss the women that they liked. Even though a man did not look very attractive, the woman was not to shy away or people would call her qunujuq, prudish. My grandmother used to say that she had to let men kiss her even though she did not like them because she didn’t want to be considered qunujuq. That was the tradition. That was one game they played. Our ancestors played all different kinds of games.
Jaikku: People had two songs of their own. One they would sing when they were gathered at a qaggiq. The other they would sing at Christmas. They would start singing the other song that was longer at Christmas. Whenever people had enough to eat, they would go ahead and celebrate.

Malaija: We are remembering things we had forgotten; I am, anyway. When I hear about some things, I start to remember about them.

We would like to hear songs for they can be useful.

Malaija: I have one short song that I remember. I used to sing songs, but I have forgotten a lot of them now. I can only remember one song. I learned it from my mother. It is about a Northern fulmar. That is the only song that I remember. It goes like this:

ujarasujjulimmi nattilimmi
In a place where there is a big rock, in a place where there are seals

ujarasujjulimmi tuttulimmi
In a place where there is a big rock, in a place where there are caribou

tamaungauna qungaaluktarivuq
Now he smiles here

tagganaapi ija ija ija, tagganaapi ija ija ija

kisumi kanna tittigusumut
Why is he giggling

uqsumi kanna tiqtigusumut iglalattarivuq
He finds fat funny, so he laughs

qingallattaalik innarmik paanngat
He has a real nose from that cliff up there.

auqsaaraqtuq
He swoops down

aija ija tama ija ija

286 Perspectives on Traditional Health
lauttii, lauqtiijuq, lauqsimauq
lauttii, lauqtiijuq, lauqsimauq

laqtiijuq, lauqtii, lauqtii, lau
laqtiijuq, lauqtii, lauqtii, lau

lauqtiijuq
lauqtiijuq

That is what I used to sing about a Northern fulmar. I may have forgotten a bit. That is all I can remember.

Jaikku: I wish I could sing like she does. It is really nice.
Obvious ly, joy is a key element of Inuit health and well being. This is why this last section is devoted to songs that were recorded at Malaija Papatsie’s qanmaq. Referring to their past experiences, the elders created a fruitful dialogue between past and present. Parts of Inuit tradition still considered useful and comforting can be assimilated right away by the younger generation.

The afternoon spent at Malaija’s qanmaq offered an ideal context to share a very joyful moment, while at the same time wrapping up the course. The elders also used this as an occasion to discuss important terms and to give wise advice.

**Jaikku:** When we were young girls, we used to sing one song after another. While playing house we sang the following song:

```
aanguaqtakka aannguaqtakka
The birds I am pretending to cut open, the birds I am pretending to cut open

aagaliaqtannguakka
the many pretend birds I have to cut open.

nuiqtannguangit
My pretend husband’s pretend bird spears

qilattannguangik
his pretend birds tied together at the neck

igaatsannguakka
my pretend birds to cook

paniqtitatsannguakka
my pretend bird skins to put to dry.
```

We would sing one song after another while we were sitting outside. We used to play a lot. We are starting to forget the games because no one plays like that anymore.

**Malaija:** Yes, I have forgotten a lot.

**Jaikku:** We have forgotten a lot about how we played because we don’t see children playing the same way we did. That is why we have forgotten.
I would like to hear you speak in English.

Malaija: I used to pretend to speak English and try to make it meaningful. I made up a song when I received a jacket that was really nice. It is in my own language, but I was pretending to speak English.

uasikua jaika ailaik
I like this jacket

That was the first line. Another time when I was unable to dance anymore, I said:

nasikaluuviit taanisi nauggut
no good at dancing

That was the second line. When I quit smoking I said:

pujualaitikaanikuuni.
I do not smoke anymore.

That is how I pretended to speak English, trying to make sense, even if I do not know the language.

Did you sing the whole song in English?

Malaija: The first time I sang it I stood up and sang it for the people who spoke English like this:

uasikua jaika ailaik
I like this jacket

nasikaluuviit taanisi naugguut
no good at dancing

pujualaitikaanikuuni.
I do not smoke anymore.

Although I knew the word ‘jacket’ and I could say ‘no’, I didn’t know any other words in English. I just pretended to speak in English. I really made a woman laugh. She could not say anything afterwards because she was laughing so much. She was laughing out loud.
Jaikku: My mother and Qalluittuq, who is deceased now, used to be good friends. She was the wife of Katsuaq. Those two friends also used to pretend to speak in English.

Malaija: I learned a song from my mother. When pretending to go kayaking or boating, they used to sing it. People know about this song:

\[
\text{umiaqturluutaluq qajaqturlutaa} \\
\text{While we are boating, while we are kayaking}
\]

\[
\text{umiaqturluutaluq qajaqturlutaa} \\
\text{while we are boating, while we are kayaking}
\]

\[
\text{umiaqturluutaluq qajaqturlutaa} \\
\text{while we are boating, while we are kayaking}
\]

\[
\text{timmuaialimmuaannikualliu timmualaniqaa} \\
tomorrow, tomorrow
\]

\[
\text{qauri, qaurijjii.} \\
qauri, qaurijjii.
\]

That is how we sang. We pretended to try and poke each other. I have forgotten some of the songs. This is another short song that I sang:

\[
\text{anaanaa sanalaurit} \\
\text{Mother, make}
\]

\[
\text{niaqujatsantinnik nirijumattaliratta surusiulluta} \\
some bread because we would like to eat, being children.
\]

\[
\text{kuuginngimasi, kuuginngimasi kuinngingimasi} \\
\text{You are not their cook. You are not their cook}
\]

\[
\text{aitsugguijumaaqtunga kuunguliruma} \\
\text{I will hand out food when I become a cook.}
\]

That is how we used to sing.

---

**Conclusion**
Malaija: People used to call the cooks kuu. I probably wanted them to give me some food thinking that when I would myself become a cook I would hand out the food I made too.

Jaikku: When children were playing, they pretended to be qallunaat. They especially liked to pretend to be cooks.

Malaija: I never pretended to be a cook, but I used to want to have a lot of pretend things. Maybe I didn’t know that cooks existed.

Jaikku: I always wanted to play cook because I thought that cooks were really nice. We used to call qallunaat women who worked “cooks”. We wanted to act like they did.

Do you remember the song you sang when you were playing hide and go seek? Can you sing uqutaa?

Malaija:

uqutaa aajiija hiu,
Forming a huddle, hiu.

alivannavugut' hiu.
Alivannavugut hiu.

aivaq, tuuqtaq kakivak. ullatsivuq,
The walrus has been pierced, has been speared. He runs

uqutallu tallimallu
five huddles.

kiikitsiarlu alikitsiarlu
Looking just like Kiki, looking just like Aliki.

kiikiuna alikiuna
It is Kiki, It is Aliki.

pualunnguaraarjukulunguna
This is a small pretend mitten.
qimmiumuna alurutaa
This blood broth belongs to the dog.

pauna ikkarruup ungataagut
Up there beyond the shallows

anikallainnaqpuq pikiakallainnaqpuq
he has gone out; he had suddenly gone out.

immuq!

That is how we used to sing it. Some parts of it are different. I used to be able to sing it without any problems. I cannot sing uquuta very well anymore.

Jaikku: That was really good.

Malaija: That’s the complete song.

Did your grandmother know these songs?
Malaija: Yes.

Jaikku: We learned these songs from our grandparents. They have survived from one generation to the next until now. Today people don’t know these songs. They have to be taught how to sing them. Since children started school, they do not know how to sing these songs anymore. So they ask questions about the traditional way of life because they no longer follow it. Even these songs we just sang are almost lost. Today they are starting to be relearned. For example, you students are asking about them. You are helping us to remember them so we are grateful to you. We have to be thankful of each other. We didn’t think that we were losing our traditional ways, but we are starting to realize that. We have been depending on government programs too much. We were starting to follow the qallunaat way of life. That is why we have started to lose our culture.

Do you know how to sing quluppaajuusi, the song which is sung while juggling?
Malaija: I know two short songs related to quluppaajuusi. They are both similar to the original song which is called quluppapajuusi.
Jaikku: Quluppaajuusi was a song that we sang frequently.

Malaija:

quluppaajuusi quluppapaajuusi
quluppaajuusi quluppapaajuusi

aija jurujunni ajiija jurujunni
aija jurujunni ajiija jurujunni.

kamiunguna kamiutaa aummiik kanummiik
This is Kamik’s ladle, To ladle up blood

taqtalatsivuq taqtalatsivuq
he shouts, he shouts

aliqqama una sivuali una
this is my older sibling’s forehead

anarnittualujuaq
which smells like feces.

atavatalaittuq.
Listen to what’s out there.

kikkulli angagigaluaqpigit?
Who are your maternal uncles?

takkikkua angagigaluaqpakka
Those next door are my maternal uncles

aijaarluutikkut, ajiijaarluutikkut
Aijaarluuti, Ajiijaarluuti,

Suqqutikkut Miqqutikkut Qattaviulinikkut
Suqquti, Miqquti, Qattaviulinikkut
Tiliurutikkut amma Nuvukkut
Tiliuruti, and Nuvuk.

ajiija
ajiija

That is how I sing the first part. The second part has a similar tune:

quluppaajuusii quluppapaajuusi
quluppaajuusii quluppapaajuusi

aiva pammunga
He fetched it.

majurava pammunga
He has brought it up.

aivaaguuniakkua atsakaavuuq, pammani
They have been fetched, they have been rolled, pammani.

atsagutiq qutuvuti samaa uqigijaqutusi samaa
You have a large object to make you roll, samaa, that which you find light samaa.

salaa, salalaa
salaa, salalaa

ataguannaai ligivatsi
You are related to Ataguannaai,

timmiaqarjuq iligivatsi
you are related to Timmiaqarjuq.

aulaqtuq aullaqtuq
He has left, he has left

qiggunut qiggunut amma
to an area where there are boulders and,
amma amaama aullaqtalirivuq
now mother has left.

qaqquajuttaqtuni qaqqujuttiamani
Crunching but not crunching that well.

pannituangugguuq nalliqpaat
He is as capable as those who have caught bull caribou.

ijaija, iqalutturama, aijaa
Ijaija, I’m eating fish, aijaa.

ujatuattuqqajarakku kuuttinaattarajarmaanga
I have not cooked it well. I would take the pelvic area.

ijiikka qilliq
My eyes. They shine!

Malaija: Jaikku, you probably know songs you learned from your grandmother and mother. Can you sing some?

Jaikku: I can sing one that I learned from my grandmother. People used to sing it while rowing. This is my grandmother’s song. The women always sang while they rowed.

sautinukua sautinukua
What do you call those things of yours. What do you call those things of yours.

akuarajualuutinukua
Are your amaauti tails flaps

amitturjuakallauvat
actually really narrow,

takiturjuakallauvat avunga
actually really long, over there

ija ija aijaa.
ija ija aijaa.
aulajjainngippat aija ikuttajurmigutta
If he doesn’t manage to budge it, aija. If we manage to break off a large piece.

aijaa
aijaa

pannijuarmiguq aija itsuqqatiqatsunga
A large bull caribou, aija. That I’m helping to carry on my shoulders

aija
aija

pijulluttanillugguuq aija simiktauliturkninna
That which there is to do aija. It is being blocked off.

aija
aija

uvvaluulii uvvaluulii sikkurjuit kakkuarjuit unaqattaqpalirlingit
uvvaluulii, uvvaluulii, let them tow those pieces of ice that are down there,

nangmaqattaqpalilirlingi uniuatsatinuq
let them carry them on their back. These are to be your tow lines,

nalaunatsatinuq kaatsunaaq satinuq
these are to be yours. These are to be your ropes.

qiq, qiq
qiq, qiq
When they stopped singing, they rowed much harder.

Malaija: They called this paanngaaq, when they started rowing faster.

Jaikku: When they travelled through strong currents by uniaq, they said the eddies caused by the current looked like a qalasiq, a navel.

Malaija: We call the current sarvaq.

Conclusion
Jaikku: This is a song they used to sing while they were going through the currents:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ua ua} \\
\text{ua ua} \\
\text{uqilliq uqilliq} \\
\text{Be light, be light.} \\
\text{uai uai} \\
\text{uai uai} \\
\text{uqilliq} \\
\text{Be light.} \\
\text{aka kakakaka} \\
\text{aka kakakaka} \\
\text{aka kakakakaka} \\
\text{aka kakakakaka}
\end{align*}
\]

That is what they sang while they were going through the currents. That is what my grandmother told us. She did not really know how to tell stories. If she did, I would have learned more from her.

My grandmother’s brother-in-law had his own song. I am named after him and that is why my name is Jaikku, which is a man’s name. I will sing this song I learned from my grandmother. It is short, and people do not usually understand it. You will not probably understand it either:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{maani ija ija maani ija ijaa} \\
\text{Here ija ija here, ija, ija.} \\
\text{maani ija ija, maani ija ija} \\
\text{Here ija ija here, ija, ija.} \\
\text{maani ija ijaa, maani ija ijaa} \\
\text{Here ija ija here, ija, ija.}
\end{align*}
\]
pinasuakkannikkua sukkungaitiuqtut
The things that I have to do are arranged so that they won't spoil.

maani ija ija, maani ija ija, maani ija ija, maani ija ija.
Here ija ija, here ija ija, here ija ija, here ija ija.

uugataujaruna salumaulingimmat
This uugataujaq has not been cleaned.

maani ija ija maani ija ija
Here ija ija, here ija ija

maani ija ija maani ja ija
Here ija ija, here ija ija

Malaija: I do not know any old songs. I do not think people in Pangniqtuuq where we lived sang ajaajaa. I do not think that my grandmother did.

Jaikku: People sang ajaajaa in Kinngait. People sang ajaajaa during the winter solstice. My grandmother told me that during the winter solstice people came together to play games. It was when she was young. As long as they were not hungry, they had feasts and played games. They celebrated in different ways. They played soccer on the ice. They played ajuttaq, a game similar to hockey back then too, but with a stick with a rope and a net attached to it.

Malaija: When children were out playing, did qallupaliit try to kidnap them and put them in their amautit during the winter?

Jaikku: They would play hockey on the ice. I assume there were qallupaliit under the ice during the winter. That is what my grandmother said. While my grandmother and her relatives were visiting, they told stories. It was during the winter solstice that people played games in a big iglu. People built a big iglu. They would get together and play games. They called it a qaggiq. One man would stand alone and six women would stand across from him wearing rabbit skin mitts. The tail feather from an akpak, a thick-billed murre would hang from the mitts. It was really nice to watch when they put their arms up slowly while a man would sing his own song. The women would also sing. That is what my grandmother used to say.

Conclusion
Malaija: When they couldn’t lift their arms up any further, they would stop singing. Maybe they did this while drum dancing. Do you know the dance called the ilala?

Do you mean the kalattattaa?

Malaija: This is how people sang the ilala:

-ingirrasivunga, ingirrasivunga qamutiuqaqtuunik.
I travel now I travel now with the large qamutik

Jaikku: I used to dance the ilala but I can not do it anymore because of my leg.

Malaija: I cannot straighten my leg anymore. You have to really straighten out your legs.

Jaikku: We would dance and sing like this:

-Kinngarmiurijuigguq ilala
They say the awesome people of Kinngait, ilala

-illuanilinnnaa ilala.
on the one side, ilala.

-ijikitsiatsunni ilala
He has a wonderfully small eye, ilala

-arvinniaqtajujuq ilala
He went bowhead whale hunting, ilala

-urmiik nanisijumagaluq
I would like to find a fish tail though

-mattialaluk nanisijumagaluq
I would like to find a bowhead whale though

-niquaq, akimi, igunaq
large marine mammal head, on the aki, it has spoiled

-qau qau
qau qau
Ilala ilala ilala ilala
Ilala ilala ilala ilala

I had forgotten about this song and dance until I went back to Kinngait for a visit. That is when it all came back to me. I was over in Kinngait for my brother’s funeral.

Malaija: I know a shorter version that is quite different.

I didn’t understand the word ajuttaq.
Jaikku: That’s because nobody plays this game anymore. Now they just play soccer. Ajuttaq is not played anymore.

Malaija: It is a game similar to hockey, but a rope is tied to the end of a stick.

Did they play in teams?
Malaija: Yes, and the players were very competitive.

Did they try to grab the ball?
Jaikku: No. They picked up a ball with the net which was tied to the rope. They did not grab the ball with their hands.

Malaija: It was like playing hockey.

Jaikku: They picked up the ball using the net. It is just like playing hockey except that a hockey stick has curved wood on the end. That is how they played ajuttaq. It was similar to hockey.

Malaija, go ahead and sing your version of ilala, the one you said that you sing differently.
Malaija:

Kinngamiujjuigguq ilala
They say the awesome people of Kinngait, ilala.

Angilaarjuanga ilala
The largest of them, ilala.

Conclusion
ijikitsiatjuruaq ilala
has wonderfully small eyes, *ilala*.

qau qau qau qau
*qau qau qau qau*

ilala ilala
*ilala ilala*

That is how we sang it.

Jaikku: We also sang *uqutaa* while we were playing hide-and-go-seek. We did not sing it the same way:

uqutaa aajija hiu,
Forming a huddle, *hui*.

aivannaavugut hiu,
The walrus has been pierced, has been speared. He runs.

alivannaavugut hiu.
*alivannaavugut hiu.*

We sang *uqutaa* while we were huddling together before we went to look for the person who was hiding. We sang:

kanna, kanna,
Down there, down there

takanna, takanna,
There it is down there, there it is down there

takanna, takanna, takanna.
there it is down there, there it is down there, there it is down there.
That is how we sang *uqutaag*; by repeating *takanna* over and over again.

**You would say the same thing over and over again?**

Jaikku: We kept saying *takanna* over and over again until someone said ready and we started looking for the person who was hiding. We sang *uquutaaq* two different ways. I sang the version my mother taught me. I only sang the one my mother used to sing.

**Can you sing Aaqsi?**

Malaija:

*Aaqsi nipangi Aaqsi*

Aaqsi, become quiet Aaqsi.

avatingiktigut umiqangngutuq

On each side (of his head) he is fed up with having a beard.

*Aaqsiroluttiq kujjangagut*

Very much like Aaqsi upside down.

Taqtuarlak kia kipingmatit kipisuuvit?

Taqtuarlak who gave you a haircut, you have a haircut.

Kiinaaksarattiap kipingmanga kipisuuvunga

Kiinaaksarattiap gave me a haircut, I have a haircut.

kippasuk kippasuk kippasuk

He has a haircut, he has a haircut, he has a haircut.

**piiq!**

**piiq!**

**Footnote**

1 Jaikku has stated that not all of the words to the songs seem to have meaning. She said that maybe a long time ago the words were understood but because of disuse they lost their meaning, yet the words were kept. Jaikku said that the songs were taught from mother to child. Although they insisted that the children learn the songs, they did not teach the meanings of the words.
Aahaunna
Word used to scold children without being harsh depending on the tone. [See aniqpannamiik].

aana
Paternal grandmother.

aanniajuq
[South Baffin] A person who was in pain such as from a chronic illness.

aanniaqtualuk
[North Baffin] A person who was sick and close to death. The person was bed-ridden and was unable to do anything. [South Baffin] Qaninajuq.

aanniaqtuq
[North Baffin] A person who was very ill, but who would recover.

aanniqtuq
Someone who had been hurt suddenly, such as in a boat or Skidoo accident or someone who had slipped and fallen; this term can also refer to a person who had been hurt emotionally.

aarnguaq
An amulet. [See attati].

aggaujait
Starfish. They are stiff and found out in the open on the beach; they have this name because they look like hands.

aglu
A seal breathing hole in the ice.

agvik
A scraping board used while cleaning sealskin.

aiqtaumajut
Breech babies that are not properly positioned to come out.

airait
Roots; particularly those of the yellow oxytrope that are used to stop diarrhea.

airaq
Yellow oxytrope.

ajuttaq
A traditional game played with a ball, a rope with a net attached, and a stick.

akuanngujuq
Cramps in the womb after delivery or during menstruation.

akuq
A seal femur.

alatsaujat
See atungaujat.

alla
A Cree Indian.

allaangaguti
Something placed between the knees to keep the legs open while giving birth. [See kasujiakku].
aluk
Paste; could be made out of dwarf fireweed, seal blood and oil for example.

aluqjak
Oil from the abdomen area of a polar bear. The inner layer of fat there is really thick.

amaaq
The root of a willow given to a baby to suck.

amarujuq
A game of chase called “like a wolf” (similar to British Bulldog) played by people of all ages. Young men liked it because it gave them a chance to chase the girl they were interested in. Young women liked it because it gave them the chance to see who was interested in them. Old women liked it because it gave them the chance to run around. Young children liked it because they could see who they could outrun.

amauti
Woman’s parka with a pouch for carrying a baby.

amiq&ak
Collared lemming. Traditionally people believed that these white lemmings were star feces that fell from the sky. They don’t seem to stay in one place.

amnajuit
[South Baffin] A person’s genital area, including the anus; the term is used for both males and females [North Baffin] angmaniiit.

anaaantsiaq
Maternal grandmother.

anaujuq
The black part along the spine of a fish having healing properties, especially in cases of botulism.

angakkukuq
A shaman.

angakkuuniq
Shamanism.

angillimajuq
When someone appears larger than they are because they are going to die.

angmaniiit
The genital area of men and women including the anus. [South Baffin] ammaniiit.

angusiaq
A boy delivered or “made” by the woman supporting a pregnant woman’s back during delivery. This term would be used by the midwife to address this child.

angutiqati
[North Baffin] cousins whose fathers are brothers or cousins (boy to boy and girl to girl).

angutiquiti
In Kinngait, the term used by a male child to address a man who supported his mother’s back during her delivery.

anikuluk
The term a woman uses when addressing or mentioning a brother she is particularly fond of.
aniqpannamiik
Word used to scold children without being harsh. Term used to indicate that a child got what they deserved. [See aahaunna].

annaktuq
Surviving hardship, whether due to sickness or starvation.

annannikuminiq
Someone who survived starvation.

apa

aqajait
Very thin soft grasses found in rivers or the sea that look like hair.

aqajarujuit
Short slippery green grasses that grow along river banks and in the sea.

aqpiit
Cloudberries.

aqtuqsituq

arnaliaq
A girl delivered or “made” by the woman supporting the pregnant woman’s back during delivery. This term would be used by the midwife to address this child. The usage of this term varies amongst communities.

arnaqati
[North Baffin] Cousins whose mothers are sisters or cousins. (boy to boy and girl to girl).

arnaquti
The term used by a male child to address the woman who supported his mother’s back during her delivery.

arraaq
Amniotic sac.

ataaqtuq
To go down to the coast from inland.

atsaqquq
A seal humerus used in a guessing game that was played to make predictions; the humerus of any mammal.

attati
A specific amulet, an aarrnguaq carried all the time. [See aarrnguaq].

atungaujat
Atungaujat in Iglulik are leaves of moutain avens. In some communities in South Baffin this term is used for gilled mushrooms; in some communities in both North and South Baffin it refers to leaves that seem to sprout individually right from the ground, that are reddish in colour and shaped like willow leaves. These leaves are known as alatsaujat in other communities.

aupilattunnguat
Purple saxifrage.

Glossary
auppuq
[Nunavik] The snow is melting; the nose or other body part is bleeding. [North Baffin] auktuq.

avaalaqiat
Dwarf birch.

avvutisimajuq
A person who isolates themselves from others.

Igittitaq
Oil extracted from caribou fat used to make soap.

iglu
Snowhouse.

igunaup qupirrunga
Aged meat.

iituaq
The smallest rib.

ijittuq
When one side of the face starts to sag because of loss of muscle control.

ijjuq
Soil.

iksiktuq
A pregnant woman who sticks out her bum towards people who are arriving in order to have an easy delivery. Same stem as in the word “to sit.”

iktitaq
A way of making oil where blubber is pounded and cut into little pieces.

ikullaumijuq
The weather gets calmer; a sick person feels better.

ikusimmik
A sling.

ilala
A traditional dance and song.

illuarjuk
[South Baffin] Male to male cousins.

illuq
[North Baffin] cousins whose mother and father are siblings (male to male and female to female).

ingiq
The cartilage connecting the pelvic bones. It is said to separate when a woman is giving birth.

ingnauti
Oil that is extracted from blubber. It was used to oil the seams in a qajaq and in kamiik, sealskin boots. It was also used for oil in the qulliq and for making bannock.

iniqtuq
When a person has finished growing; when something you are making is completed.

inualua
The eye of a boil.

inugarulligaat
Small human-like beings said to have lived near the shore. If you looked at them from their feet up they would look very large. They are very strong. They suffocate people with their groins.
inuujaq
A small homemade doll, formerly made of antler, now of wood.

ipiksaut
A sharpener.

ippiarjuujait
See nuvaqqiq.

iquutit
Rockweed.

isumaluttuq
A person who is worried or depressed.

isumaluttuq
A person who has a bad temper.

isurrannguat
Mountain avens.

itillijuq
Sleepwalking.

itinniaqpauk
Pretend to paddle.

itiq
Sea urchin; could be used as an aarrnguq. It was sometimes called ituujaq. Also the word for anus.

itittaq
A piece of blubber hung on a peg over the qulliq after being pounded to obtain oil.

itsi
The juice from a plant [Pangniqtuuq].

ittikpaktumik
Something or someone that is extremely dirty; for example a person’s body, hair.

ivvarluktuq
A person who can’t get comfortable in bed and can’t fall asleep.

Kajjik
Having a double crown on the head.

kakillarnait
Prickly saxifrage.

kalattata
A traditional dance and song.

kallat
Bearberries.

kamiik
Pair of sealskin boots; any footwear.

kanan-naq
East.

kangaaqtuq
Something that makes you feel trepidation.

kasujjaikkuti
An object used to keep a woman’s legs open while she was given birth on her side. [See allaangaguti].

kiangiqtuq
Sweating to a point of dehydration.

kigutangirnait
Blueberries.
kigutangirnaquti
Blueberry bush.

kiliktuq
Removing the layer between the skin and the meat on a piece of blubber using a scraper.

kiliugait
Barnacles; sea food tasting like clams and having the appearance of teeth; stuck to the rocks. They can be found when walking on the beach at low tide. Excellent when boiled for people feeling weak and sick and for those who are constipated.

killiuq
The leftover fat after blubber was scraped.

kiluarajuq
Wounds that keep opening up when they are supposed to heal.

kimmautiik
The jaw muscles.

kimminnait
Cranberries.

kimmiqquaq
The lump at the back of the hind feet of land animals.

kipinnikuit
Children who have stopped growing after having been traumatized after losing their parents.

kisuliaq
Boys or girls delivered or “made” by the woman supporting the pregnant woman’s back during delivery. This term would be used by the midwife to address these children. The usage of the term varies amongst communities.

kuanniit
Arctic kelp.

kukujait
Capitate lousewort.

kumak
A louse.

kuutsinaak
[South Baffin] The pelvic area. Kuuttinnaak [North Baffin].

kuuttinnaak
[North Baffin] The pelvic area. Kuutsinaak [South Baffin].

Majurajuq
A person whose sickness travels upwards in the body.

maktaaq
Narwhal or beluga whale skin. Maktaaq is the skin of a bowhead whale.

maktak
The skin of a bowhead whale. Maktaaq is the skin of narwhal or beluga whale.
maliganguaruluk
An unimportant rule that doesn’t need to be followed.

malitsuagait
Seabeach sandwort.

mamaittuqutiit

manijjugaqtuq
A person who is sobbing. Sometimes when children have been crying a lot, after they stop they continue to sob.

maniq
Lamp moss.

marniq
Yellow sputum.

mikiliraq
Ring finger.

miqqapiat
Seaweed similar to that found on the tidal flats but which are found in brooks and streams.

miqqulligiaq
A caterpillar.

mitiq
An eider duck.

Naakuluapik
A big stomach.

naalauttajiit
Those who had the ability to predict future events.

naggijuq
[Kivalliq] A person whose leg was broken. Navittuq [Mittimatalik and Iglulik].

nagliktaijuq
An abused child taken away by unseen beings.

najangajaq
A game played with young children where their toes would be pulled to see how many animals someone would catch.

nakattijut
When urine remains in the bladder even after someone has urinated.

nakattuaqtuq
Bladder disorder.

nakattuq
Something that had broken off. Young people in Mittimatalik now use this word for a broken leg, rather than the word used by the elders, navittuq.

naquitiit
Blueberry bush, short form for kigutanginaquitiit.

narunalattijuq
Sickness that travelled through the body.

natsiq
A ringed seal. Nattiq [North and East Baffin].

natsivak
nattirjuaq
Seal meat that has been aged by being cached.

navittuq
Term used by elders in Mittimatalik and Iqaluit for a broken leg.

niaqunngujuq
A person who has a headache.

niaquttaq
Clumps of moss.

niaqututi
A headband used to apply pressure to help get rid of a headache.

nigalluaqtuq
An injury to the joint connecting the shoulder blade to the humerus.

nigalluq
The joint connecting the shoulder blade to the humerus.

nigguq
The slippery part on the top of the fish skin. It looks like saliva. Used to wash things, similar to soap.

nilamingajuq
Something that is laid out completely flat; blubber applied as a bandaid once the oil drained.

nilaq
A piece of ice.

niqirjuaq
Bowhead whale meat.

niqittannait

nirjuajutuq
To have a premonition. When a person dreams that something good is going to happen. An unpleasant premonition is qunujuaqtuq.

nirnait
Caribou lichen.

nirukkarujuit
Contents of the stomach of a grazing animal.

niummat
Goose bumps and large skin pores.

nukiniiqatuq
When an angakkq would cut the strength of the wind if the wind had been blowing too long and wouldn’t let up.

nukipalliaguti
A way of strengthening a baby or a child by praising their accomplishments.

numasuktuq
Feeling depressed.

nunajqaqtuq
To go inland from the coast.

nuqjqaqtuq
A muscle that couldn’t be straightened out, a person who couldn’t straighten out their muscles.
nusuvuq
A person who twitches constantly while sleeping.

nutilliarjuit
Fresh water fish.

nuvaqqiq
Jellyfish; a small red circular sea animal whose name is related to nuvak “saliva”; said to be very good for impetigo and sores that are not healing properly; also good for hand rashes. They are called ippiajiuit in some dialects.

Paalirnarmat
Damage to the skin caused by sun and wind.

paanngaaqtut
To start rowing harder in an umiaq or a qajaq after singing songs.

palaugaq
A flat bread; generally known as bannock.

papak
Amniotic sac of animals.

patiq
Bone marrow.

patriniq
A caribou leg bone that had the marrow removed.

pauktuutit
Drying pegs.

paunnait
Dwarf fire weed.

paurngait
Crowberries; also known as blackberries.

piggusiqtaujuq
Speech intended to give power to a baby.

pisiq
A traditional song; term now used for hymns. Whenever someone would sing a song, it was expected that they would acknowledge whose song it was.

pitailiniq
Pl. pitailiniit. Refraining from doing something that was forbidden. Breaking a pitailiniq would result in serious consequences to the individual or to the camp.

piusirlunniq
Physical disability.

puijiit
Sea mammals.

puja
Dried blubber; rancid and congealed oil; sticky or gooey oil.

pullaqtuq
A person who was bloated.

puttaqquti
The air bladder inside a fish. It is long and pink and located next to the spinal cord. Could be used as an attati.

Qaggillutit
People gathering; celebrating and playing games in the qaggiq.
qaggiq
Large iglu used when people gather together; feast house.

qairulik
A harp seal.

qajaq
Man’s hunting boat.

qajuq
A broth.

qakuktuq
Something that turns white. [See qaulluqtuq].

qalasiujaq
A strong circular eddy in the ocean.

qallunaq
Pl. qallunaat. A white person.

qallunaajarutii
Playful term for Adam’s apple; it means, “what enables one to speak in English.” Said to make the voice sound better. Also called qingannguaq, which means “it’s like a nose.”

qallupilluk
[North Baffin] Human-like creatures that live under the ice and take children away by carrying them on their backs. Qalupalik [South Baffin]

qalupalik
[South Baffin] Human-like creatures that live under the ice and take children away by carrying them on their back. Qallupilluk [North Baffin].

qamutiiq
A dogsled.

qanimajattuq
[South Baffin] A very ill person who would probably recover [North Baffin] surangajuq.

qanimajuq
[South Baffin] Ill to a point of not being able to do anything. The term refers to a very sick person. [North Baffin] aamiaqtualik.

qanimarujutuinnaqtuq/qanimatuinnaqtuq
[South Baffin] Someone whose sickness would pass; a person who was sick, but who could get around on their own and was expected to recover. [North Baffin] surangajuq.

qarmaq, qammaq
A sod house; a snowhouse with the top covered by a tent.

qattaujaq
A barrel.

qaulluqtuq
Something that turned white. [See qakuktuq].

qavuit
In some dialects this term can be used to refer to people who are bedridden from a sickness; also sick animals.

qijuktaaqpait
[Baffin] Labrador tea. Mamaittuqtiiit [Nunavik].
qiujktaat
Arctic bell heather.

qilaniq
A divination ritual performed by trying to lift a leg, head or an object by having a rope tied around it to foresee the location of game, someone who was lost, etc.

qilualatsijuq
When a person is twitching because they are having a premonition.

qimatuannuqat
[South Baffin] A stash of items put aside for a later date. [North Baffin] ijiqtuat.

qingangnguaq
Adam’s apple; the word means “looks like a nose.” [See qallunaajaruti].

qiqquat
Common seaweed.

qisaruaq
The stomach of a grazing animal; excellent to help heal burns.

qissuquttuq
When flesh is protruding from a wound.

qitiq
The small of the back.

quajautit
Rock tripe.

quarait
Net veined willow.

quinijuq
A fat person.

qulliq
The traditional seal oil lamp.

qullurniit
Split ends in the hair.

quinugliit
Mountain sorrel.

qunujuq
When a person dreams of something unpleasant, it is a sign that something bad will happen. A good premonition is niriujaaqtuq.

qunujuq
To be reticent to do something with someone.

qupirruuit
Worms.

quppariik
The two vertical halves of the body.

quqqaaq
The place where the esophagus and the stomach connect.

quqqaaqtuq
A person sick to the point of being unable to move.

qutuq
A broken collarbone.

qutuq
The collarbone.
quvvik
The lower eyelid.

Sajuktuuq
To twitch.

sajunniq
Twitching.

sakajuq
A shaman calling his helping spirit(s).

saliguut
A scraper that has a straight blunt edge, used to take excessive moisture off of skins.

sanaji
The term used by a female child to address the woman who supported her mother’s back during her delivery.

sanatuillutait
The long curved creases in a person’s palm.

sanittinnaqtuq
When a person is having difficulty swallowing; it also refers to a person who is making an effort to do something that they find difficult.

saqqarluktut
Indigestion.

sarvaq
Open water; water kept open by currents; the current. [See qalasiijuaq].

saulluqtuq
Digging out feces that were impacted.

sauniq
The person you are named after.

sauniriik
Two persons sharing the same name.

sigirirjuq
A person who had a bad stomach-ache after eating.

siirniq
Spring water from the top of a river following a full moon. Excellent for sick people; often requested by elders.

siiruluktuq
A person suffering from heartburn.

silaluktuq
Someone with the propensity to make the weather bad when they were about to engage in an outdoor activity, because they were born during bad weather.

silituq
A stout person.

sillinngujijuq
A person who feels a hard knot in their stomach after eating.

silu
Washed up carcass of a marine mammal.

sipiniq
A male child that transforms into a female just before or just after birth.

siqpaluaq
An ingrown nail that was infected.
siqqitiqtuq
Turning away from shamanism (in the same context, to save the life of a person who was to die).

suluk
The quill of a feather.

sungaq
A gall bladder.

suputiit
The flowers of a willow gone to seed.

surangajuq
[North Baffin] A person who was sick whose illness was expected to pass. [South Baffin] qanimarujutuinnaqtuq; qanimajattuq.

Takummisuttuq
Someone who is waiting to see something.

takusiuut
When a person’s eye would twitch because they would soon be seeing someone they hadn’t seen a while.

taliquujuq
Pain in the left arm of a woman or the right arm of a man.

tangiq
The solid part of the blubber; indissoluble remains of blubber chunks (after oil has been removed).

taqqut
A wick trimmer.

tarniq
The soul.

tasiqquq
A skin stretcher.

tiggaq
Male seal whose meat stinks during rut.

tigungarujuktuq
When a baby was born with clenched hands; this was considered a good sign.

tingaujait
Caribou moss.

tiriaq
Pl. tiriat. An ermine.

tiringnaqtuq
A person who is going through a pittailiniq such as a pregnant woman, or a woman who was menstruating.

tuigisatqaq
A baby who had a caterpillar placed on their shoulder at birth so they would be successful at a game where men would punch each other on the shoulder when the child got older.

tulugarnaq
A small raven.

tummaqtuq
A person with an injured neck; a person who can’t turn their head.

tuniit
People who inhabited the Arctic before the Inuit and who disappeared shortly after Inuit arrived.

tunnuq
Caribou fat.

tupilait
Roaming lost spirits of the dead who frighten people, and who can sent away by the power of aarnguat, amulets.

tuqusiut
When someone’s body would twitch because someone was going to die.

tusaagaliit
People who heard things that were not there.

tusaattiangtittuq
A person who has a hearing problem.

tusiattuq
A person who limps.

tusilattuq
A person who misunderstands what is said.

tuurngaq
A shaman’s spirit helper.

tuutaijuq
Pl. tuutaijut. A person who is constipated.

Uattiaru
Later. In some regions this means a long time ago.

ugjuk
Bearded seal.

ullivik
A place to stay while waiting for a storm to quiet down.

ulu
A woman’s knife.

ungirlaaq
A walrus that had had its organs removed. The opening was then laced shut, and then the meat was cached for later use.

unikkaaqtuat
Very old stories.

uppatiik
The buttocks.

uqaujait
Young willow leaves.

uqsutii
A method of preparing oil in which blubber would be placed in barrels or drums in the summer and covered until use in the fall.

uquk
Vernix; the white substance covering a newborn baby.

uqumangirniq
[South Baffin] A nightmare; aqtuqsittuq [North Baffin].

uquuquq
Term used by young children to identify an animal. If said by a young child without encouragement, it meant that if his father was away hunting, he would be back soon, after a successful hunt.

uutirmaq
A very high fever.

uvingajaaqtuq
A person whose body is slanted more to one side than the other. The sides are not equal.

uvinnittujuq
A plump person.
For more references about modern medicine, health and disease among all the Inuit groups, see the bibliography from Fortuine et al., 1993; as well as various issues from the *International Journal of Circumpolar Health and Alaska*.

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