Food, Culture, & Community

VOLUME 6 NUMBER 2 2006

The editors regard the publication of 'Food, Culture, & Community', guest-edited by Lynette Hunter and with its wide ranging, substantive, and diverse essays, as contributing significantly to the series.

Thank you.

Shirley Chew
General Editor

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We also wish to thank all the contributors to this journal; Soun Vannithorne for the many delightful fish illustrations swimming in and out of these pages, pictures drawn by him for Alan Davidson's series of books on fish and fish cookery, and also for the picture of Alan Davidson, p. 2; Simon Cohen for all his help in supplying extra photos for 'Eat Art and Communities', and Bárbara Ortiz for her drawings; Peter Brears, for the drawings in 'Traditional Foods in England?'; Abdullah Breshna for his pictures in 'Picnicking in Afghanistan'; Peter Kulchyski for the photo of the children Nadia and Aaden Metuk, with Malay Pilz, and Noah Metuk cutting up the ringed seal (natsiq) for eating, in the essay 'Sharing, Preparing and Eating in Panniqtuuq, Nunavut'.

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Front 'Eat Art', Melbourne, 2003
Back 'Our Daily Bread', Andrew Qappik, 1995, Stencil
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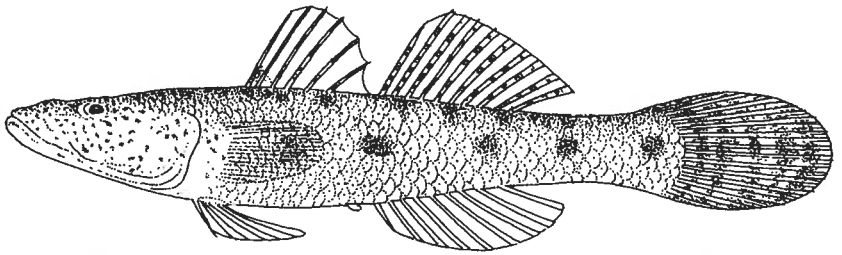
Editorial

LYNETTE HUNTER

Food has a way of bringing people together and also of keeping them apart. It is a defining experience for communities and cultures all over the world, something that has been increasingly recognized over the past two or three decades, and it has recently become a site for scholarly, critical, and historical attention.

In Europe, one of the most outstanding figures in this movement was Alan Davidson, to whom this issue is dedicated. Alan received the prestigious Erasmus prize for services to food culture and gastronomy in November 2003, shortly before his death. The press, Prospect Books, that he started with his wife Jane Davidson in 1979, introduced foods, food pathways, and cultures from around the world to English-speaking audiences. The journal *Petits Propos Culinaires* deepened our understanding of the historical, geographical, social and economic background to foods and the communities that use them. Always, the standard of publication quality was exceptional, and the literary voices that came to life were unique and subtle.

Most of the people who have contributed to this collection knew Alan Davidson or his work, and have been inspired by him for many years. The essays are at times historical, at others focused on location; at times to do with particular places and peoples, at others with foodstuffs, ingredients, and materials. All are focused on community building, through ceremony, festival, celebration, or daily meals and forage. Ranging from communities of scholars and scholarship, to communities in urban, rural, desert and savannah settings, the essays explore the profoundly cohesive memory work of eating. They claim food as a documentation of individual and social life, and its traces in the body and in their writing as an archive of community history.



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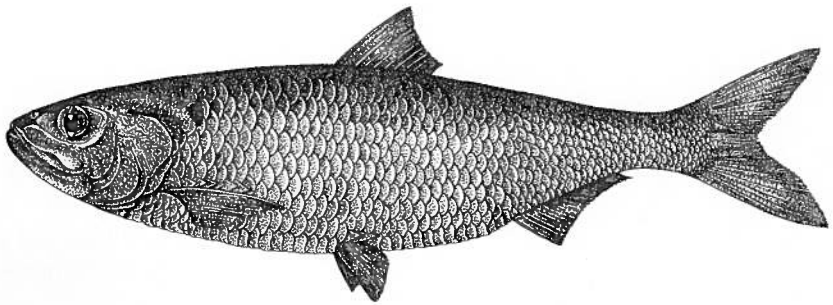


Sharing, Preparing and Eating in Panniqtuuq, Nunavut[1]

LYNETTE HUNTER

Selina Kisa (Community Health Worker, Panniqtuuq)

Out on the land, there's something ... everything's tasting better, I don't know.

I went camping with my common law step-grandmother. She made seal stew – oh it was good. She made a soup and put in carrots, potatoes, onions, just a little fat, and fresh seal. How many people, 10 of us were there.

I was given not a very big bowl, and I finished it all up. What they do is, take out the meat first and put it on the ground, and get a cup to drink the broth.

It was really different, more tasty. And the meat, just go for it!

When you eat seal, every time I eat seal I remember, the boiled seal. But it never had that taste again.

The community of Panniqtuuq, just south of the Arctic Circle on the southern part of the northeastern arm of Baffin Island, has been a gathering place for Inuit people for thousands of years. It has had southern (central Canadian) dwellings since the Hudson's Bay built an outpost in 1921, and was established as a Hamlet in 1973. Since 2003 it has had a Nunavut Territory government office in the community. The people of Panniqtuuq have had to respond to southern foods and food technologies for the last two hundred years, and have continuously attempted to create a balance in their diet. One recent example has been a project begun by the midwives and the community health worker in the late 1990s to gather recipes for a cookery book. I became involved because I was in the Hamlet to research storytelling and social change, and because I had some familiarity with publishing cookbooks.

Panniqtuuq crouches on the northeastern side of a fjord leading north from Cumberland Sound, the great whaling ground of the mid-nineteenth century. From the 1820s to the 1870s, Scots and New England whalers came into the area, often working with the Inuit living on the surrounding lands. The whalers brought with them flour, sugar, and lard for making bannock, but to a large extent they had to learn from the Inuit how to survive by catching fish, seal, caribou, whale and walrus. When they left, the Inuit by and large resumed their traditional living, although some whaling continued on Kekerten Island just down

the fjord from what is now the Hamlet of Panniqtuuq.

For centuries, Inuit families would be out on the land in summer and winter, and gather in places like Panniqtuuq for celebrations and talk. It was because of this history that the Hudson's Bay set up store to encourage trade in skins and bone. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police followed in 1923, and St Luke's church and hospital opened in 1929. Although there was a gradual increase in houses through to the end of the 1950s, what really brought the area together as a Hamlet was the distemper epidemic among the husky dogs that peaked in 1962. Without a dog team, winter camping and hunting was arduous, if not impossible. So people began to congregate into the Panniqtuuq shoreline between the cliffs and the sea. In the 1980s the Hudson's Bay left, and was replaced by the Northern Stores and the Pangnirtung Cooperative. There is now, in 2006, a population of over 1,700 and a further two food stores, as well as a Quikstop serving tea, coffee, muffins, burgers, and other fast food, and Grandma's Kitchen, a burger take-out at the other end of the Hamlet.

During the late 1950s and into the 1960s, other forces were at work. The tuberculosis epidemic, which had resulted in many Inuit going south for treatment that often took several years, introduced a different way of life and different kinds of foods. The residential school system meant that young Inuit were sent away to school on the mainland, and again had to adapt to southern ways. The airplanes started flying north bringing visitors, and the possibility of greater mobility – although Panniqtuuq is relatively isolated and partly by choice. The 'road to nowhere' in the territory's capital Iqaluit is the remains of the road that was started toward Panniqtuuq before the Hamlet voted against it. Even now, the short plane ride is frequently interrupted by weather, leaving people stranded in Iqaluit or Panniqtuuq for days: the runway at Panniqtuuq is short, and sandwiched between the Hamlet on two sides and the cliff on one other. Approach is only possible from one direction, and there's little leeway.

Evie Anniniliak

> Today is very different because there are not only Inuit living here.[2] Before the Northern only had non-perishable foods, but then things began to be shipped in. I learned to cook from working at the health centre. This was in the 1940s, and we cooked traditional food and southern food for the patients. I remember the first meal I cooked for my husband, he liked it very much. He wasn't much of a cook. At first I stayed with my husband at my father's, and my stepmother cooked and I learned from her.
>
> We would make caribou, bannock, seal, fish. Caribou, stewed or fried, is my favourite. And there is new bannock now, you put in fruit and cook in the oven. I still eat raw food, but not big portions. I really like tongue, but not raw.
>
> My caribou stew, I cut it up and put in water with different kinds of vegetables. I boil it until it is ready, I don't like it raw and cook it right through. Sometimes I put in soup to make it taste different.

The people of Panniqtuuq have fostered traditional skills and knowledge, not to remain in the past but to remain in touch with the values that have built, and are still building, their culture and society. Traditional knowledge is often not verbally communicated, but learned by observation, and is central to learning food preparation techniques.

Martha Kenojuak

> Often the women stay with their mother to teach them how to make clothing, how to support their family, making food, how to have a family. So, that was taught from when you were very young and often ... This is ... what elders would explain, 'This is why we are doing. Because you will have a family later, and you will know what to do. We'll show you how to do it. You will observe, and when you are observing you have to listen from your observations. 'Cause you will need them in future life'.

Part of the context for 'cookery' in Panniqtuuq is to pay respect to the people who have taught you how to prepare meals. Nevertheless, everyone then turns this learning into their own expertise, and teaches their own version of it, inevitably recontextualized by their own lives, to another generation.

Many of the traditional basic skills are still essential to life and have been adapted to the current need. The high cost of transporting southern goods means that basics, such as flour, are at least twice the price they are in Toronto, and that a box of cereal can be three or four times as much. People regularly say that they wouldn't survive unless they hunted or knew a hunter who would share the meat.[3] Evie Anniniliak pointed out that when you hunt, 'Everybody shared it among themselves, so it was different. Because we didn't have to pay for it, we shared it among other people.' Once the stores opened up, money was involved, and this changed the relation of people to what they were eating and why they were eating it. Evie commented that 'Since they have opened up that Quikstop, the kids want money all the time to go eat there instead.' But sharing is still a fundamental concept in the society.[4] Most still live in an extended family world, and the community is made up of the people who are there 'at the time'. If one person comes back with a caribou this week, someone else may get lucky in the hunt next week, so it makes sense to share. In the past, if you did not

share, people would die. Today, if you do not share, life is very tough. Sharing the hunt also puts into circulation common materials like foods, skins for clothing, tents, boats and a range of other work, bones for building, sewing and the like. As one Inuk says, 'When I share food with someone it makes a friendship.'[5]

Sharing is also something that is linked to social contribution, whether that be determined by age, sex, gender, family or ability. Many communities on Baffin still share an animal differently depending on sex, with women eating, for example from a bearded seal, the head, heart, upper chest, tip of spine and upper shoulder, and the men eating the lower spine and the ribs. Not that one part of the animal is 'better' than another, but, from this account, 'it was divided into portions for men and women because there wasn't enough room for everyone to sit around the same carcass'.[6] The description indicates that the mode of food preparation is around raw rather than cooked food, and most people in Panniqtuuq whom I met still ate a lot of food raw.

David Akpalialuk

I like caribou, muktuk, frozen no sweat. And blueberries and bread with mamali jam.

You put a fish head out for one week till there's a blue eye and it's a better taste, easier to eat. I prefer to eat it raw.

Breads and vegetables, they leave you to get hungry easily. Traditional Inuit food is better, it feels like the body works more like it should do.

Muktuk, get frozen muktuk and cut it with an ulu, like mince, and put on salt – it's excellent ...

The younger generation compared to me, we don't eat as much as they are used to. It's really different now, to what we ate with the Hudson's Bay. When there used to be a store down there it only had flour, sugar and powered milk. The ship used to come in October, most of the time, in the Fall. There was a store in 1922 and the hospital in 1933. Before that there were absolutely no buildings, nice and flat only with the RCMP, and only four other houses.

Now it's diabetes, it's not been a problem for long, the junk food started it.

When I was down south I wanted something raw so much. I ate frozen pork chops and steaks.

In 1970, one member of the Panniqtuuq community, Rosie Veevee, took southern cooking classes at the Arctic College outpost, and then began to teach other women in the community how to cook southern foods.

Rosie Veevee

The Adult Education Centre started this program. We went from house to house – we would tell whoever's coming to learn, how to cook. We also taught how to do the house and then cook afterwards. There would be at least 19 people. We had so much to do we had to split it with another woman called Rosie [probably Rosie Okpik] too.[7]

Rosie Veevee also travelled to Clyde River to teach there, and went with a group to Broughton Island to learn about nutrition, and to Iqaluit. Through the 1970s and 1980s she taught cooking to the teenagers in the Hamlet; she said, 'a lot of teens were interested. Lots came, they wanted to learn. But that program finished'.[8]

Rosie Veevee and others had to learn to cook southern style not only because there were different foodstuffs coming into the Hamlet, but because 'cooking' as a mode of food preparation was not usual in the community. Until 1999 what is now the Nunavut Territory was subsumed under the Northwest Territories in Canada. However, the signal difference between Nunavut and the Northwest Territories as they now are is that Nunavut is above the treeline.[9] There is no fuel for cooking except driftwood and rendered seal fat lit in a qilliq or stone bowl. Nor are there many edible plants. The Canada Food Guide fridge magnets made for Nunavut have four categories: 'For strong muscles', 'For strong bones and teeth', 'For good eyes, skin and less infection', and 'For energy'. Vegetables and fruits come under the third category, and, while the first two contain many northern or traditional foods, the third category is largely southern, exhibiting frozen orange juice and bananas,

with just three examples of traditional foods: seaweed, berries, and alpine sorrel or nakanee. The foods in the 'energy' category are all southern foods by origin, like bread or bannock, although bannock has been in the diet for nearly two hundred years, and is treated like a traditional food. The community of Panniqtuuq, like others in Nunavut, had to learn to use the energy source of propane gas and electricity, the technology of hobs and ovens, as well as taking on a radically different organization of food groups, before even thinking about cooking.

Traditional foods in Nunavut offer a balanced diet. The Inuit have one of the lowest incidences of heart disease among any meat-eating food cultures.[10] This may be because of the high incidence of omega3 fatty acids in polar bear, walrus, whale and seal blubber.[11] Vitamin A is also found in blubber (and caribou liver), vitamin B in seal, vitamin C in whale and seal muktuk, vitamin D in fish, beluga whale, ringed seat fat and liver. Cooked or aged bones provide a range of other vitamins as well as calcium, and ringed seal and whale muktuq have a high incidence of selenium which has been credited with anti-free radical activity as well as lowering the amount of mercury in the body. Muktuk is the hard layer of tissue between the skin and the blubber of seals and whales. Typically the blubber is scraped off or rendered down, leaving the muktuk and skin. Knives are traditionally used by men, and ulus by women, for chopping the muktuk against the thick skin, or slicing it in thin pieces that people chew for ten to thirty minutes. It is said that it was because the whalers would not eat muktuq that so many of them suffered, and sometimes died, from scurvy.

Saila Nakashuk

Before, the whole seal was used, right down to the brain and intestines. In the wintertime, seal meat warms you up right away because of the blood. I eat it a lot still and want to continue eating it forever. Young people only eat seal if they are brought up to eat it. They learn from watching at home and also out camping.

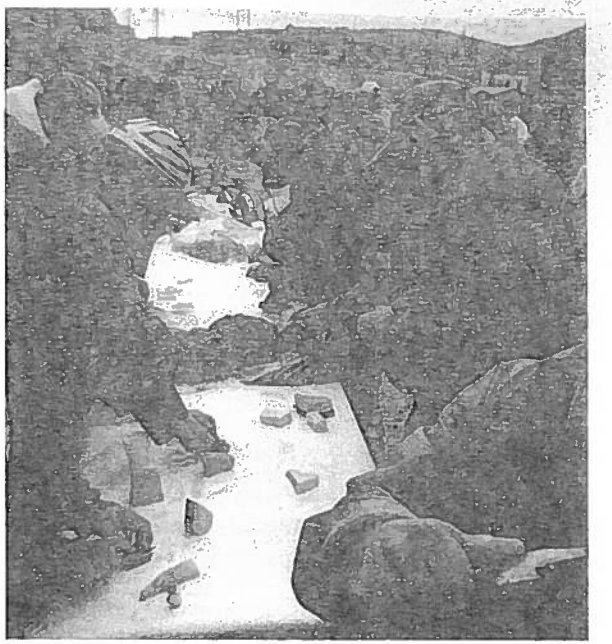
With seal brain you boil the whole head, and it's also good raw. Just break the skull with anything hard, then just eat the brain out of the skull. Clean out the intestines and then eat or freeze first. The only thing you can't eat frozen is polar bear meat.

My favourite dish is boiled fish in salt water.

In the morning we would have fish or seal, there was no tea or bannock, and it made you feel good. Now I can eat anything but I still eat fish in the morning.

We have adapted foods to southern ways. Seal meat now? How to do it? I use tomato juice, or lipton tomato soup, and onions, carrots, potatoes and a bit of oatmeal to make it taste better. I like chicken noodle soup in fish stew.

Sometimes I cook fish in tin-foil. I use the batter for bread and dip in the fish and fry it in regular oil.



We didn't eat lichens and mosses, only used them for making a fire. Seaweed was good to dip in something, it was hot and ready right away. Even if the seaweed is raw it's really good. If it's in stew, dip it in and when it turns greener than before, it's ready.

There's berries. I enjoy picking berries more than anything in the world. In September. There are blackberries, blueberries – they break easily when you pick them. And red giminey berries, that taste sweet/sour. They make good jam.

Berries are very good for your body. If you are making a cake or pastries they are good.

Southern foods can make you sick, with all that sugar. But we eat traditional foods.

And there's nakanee, and sweet/sour koahlie leaves.

Ducks and ptarmigan are good raw, and all birds, geese as well, are very good boiled. And we ate hare and eggs and green leaves.

We watched our mothers to learn how to cook. Fathers were out hunting, every day except Sundays, women did not go out hunting. This was 1949 and there were only certain kinds of southern foods like medicine, but the time was changing.

As southern foods entered into the Inuit diet, they were accompanied not only by the benefits of southern diet[12] but also by southern problems, such as fast foods with little nutritional value. One of the first attempts to deal with this was a massive Canadian Government push to get information out to prenatal and pregnant women, the 1994 Prenatal Nutrition Workshops. These workshops took place all over Canada,

including in most communities in the Northwest Territories that then included Nunavut. In 1997 the Northwest Territories Prenatal Nutrition Workshop Cookbook was published with recipes from across the north, and some from southern First Nations cookbooks that had been tried and tested in the north.[13] Not surprisingly, given the lack of fuel, the high cost of southern foodstuffs because of the isolation of the communities, and the completely different terrain of the cold desert that is the landscape of the tundra above the treeline, very few recipes came from Nunavut sources, but four did come from Panniqtuuq.

In the Panniqtuuq recipes, southern foodstuffs could be mixed with northern as in this recipe for fried seal meat: Dice fresh seal meat, toss in flour, salt and pepper (or other spices), fry on a medium heat for 15 to 20 minutes but no longer or it will become hard. Fry onions and mushrooms separately, then mix the two together and serve with potatoes or corn. Or they might be completely southern as in this recipe for Healthy Sandwiches: make a fruit and nut filling for a sandwich with layers of sliced orange, banana, raisins and crunchy peanut butter. A traditional recipe that was passed on in the research in 2000 was for tunnu: take seal or whale blubber and cut up two handfuls very small. Whisk it with your open fingers until it becomes light and frothy, then add berries, or crisply fried sealskin bits. And everyone I met had their own recipe for caribou stew or fried or stewed seal.

Oolipika Qappik

Muktuk stir-fry: Take the skin part of a Beluga and get rid of the soft blubber so you keep the hard fat just under the skin. Cut this into little pieces as big as your thumbnail and boil for about 15 minutes until it's soft. While it is boiling you can cut up the other vegetables like mushrooms, carrots, onion and potato, and fry in a frying pan with a tablespoon of butter.

When the muktuk is cooked, you drain off the fat and put it into the stir-fry vegetables just as they are nearly ready. Then you can put in salt and pepper and other seasonings you like. You can eat it with rice.

Louisa Angmarlik

You know the fried bits of seal left over from getting the fat? You fry them. The fat was used as oil for the qilliq. We don't really need it but we hang on to it, to doing the qilliq. Or get little chunks of seal with a bit of meat on them and lots of fat. Fry them till they are hard and crispy. I had this when I was younger, and I'll never forget it. My aunt made it.

Other favourite southern recipes I encountered were for pineapple upsidedown cake, with the expected ingredients: butter, brown sugar, canned pineapple and a cake mix made up into batter. There are other

high sugar, prepared foods in many of the current recipes, indicating a primary source of the other health issue urgently being pursued in the north, and among First Nations peoples, of diabetes. A recent addition to the guidance on cooking southern foods aimed at diabetes is the *Mamaqtut* cookbook, an informative, well-written and thought-through web-based cookbook published in 2004.[14] But many local Panniqtuuq recipes are careful adaptations combining traditional with southern: deepfried clams dipped in pancake batter; hot dogs wrapped in bannock dough and cooked, ready for taking on a hike; arctic hare boiled with onions and dumplings; fish chowder with milk and potatoes; caribou stew with mushrooms; blueberry cheesecake.

Hana Tautuajuk

I taught Peepeelie's husband how to cook. I showed him which foods were good to make. He was my dad's stepbrother. I didn't teach him everything but I worked at the store and suggested things. I did a cooking course here for three years, and worked at the hotel and learned with someone at the hotel about southern foods. I learned how to cook traditional foods myself.

It's not easy to remember about food, but I remember the first time I cooked for a lot of people. I would cook for many people at the hotel, and celebrations like Christmas with a lot of people in the family. I make turkey, more southern. Desserts for young people like cheesecake, cakes, pies, different fruit and berries. I don't follow recipes.

Back in time I was in the middle of the traditional way of living because I went to work in the hospital when I was twelve years old. So I remember the bannock, caribou stew, seal. There were always southern foods available.

It is important for women to know how to cook, very important to know how to make good healthy food that is good for the body. People should learn more. But young people are not so interested. My own daughters and grandchildren are interested, it goes in families. My daughter would call me all the time before about cooking, but now they don't call so much because they know how to do it. My son in Yellowknife, he called me and asked me how to make my fish chowder.

Chowder: I cut up the fish into pieces, about a pound. I put butter in the pot and flour in the butter and mix it up when it is heating. When it turns brown, I add milk about a pint and keep mixing it with a whisk. Then I turn it off for a bit and chop up onions. You can either fry the onions or add them right away. I turn the pot on again and put in cauliflower, potatoes if you want, broccoli, celery, carrots. I cut them up and add to the sauce – you mustn't let it get too hot on the bottom. To make it look better put in green peas. When the vegetables are soft but not too soft I add the fish and boil it until the fish is ready. I could add beluga, cut up very small and cook it longer. Or clams or mussels.

Clams: take the shells off the clams and put them in milk and then in salt and pepper and flour, then I fry them. I also just use pancake mix and then deep fry them.

Rabbit I boil with dumplings, onions and salt and pepper.

I put blackberries and blueberries in pancake mix.

I really like Chinese food, and bought chicken wings from the Northern (store)

to fry on my own, but I don't do it very much.

My worst time was when my aunt from Broughton Island came in around Christmas and we were very happy because we are very close, she is my father's sister. They had turkey the day before and there were lots of leftovers. We heated them up and we were really sick. We couldn't even stand any more and someone went to the Health Centre for medicine. I learned not to heat up turkey – seems like I have no problem remembering this.

Two areas of food that were not much discussed, and for which there were few recipes, were herbs, lichens and small tundra plants, and the whole topic of aged meat. Many small bushes provide leaves for medicinal use and for infusions: these include Labrador Tea (mamaittuqutik), bearberry (kinnikinnick), alpine smartweed (kakalianakotiq), fireweed (paunaq), cloudberry (arpehutik), mountain sandwort (maliksuarak), dwarf willow (amaarllinaaq) and mountain avens (malikkat), as well as the ubiquitous saxifrages.[15] Many, such as koahlie,[16] are picked and sucked through cloth.

Louisa Angmarlik

Qaraq have very small leaves. You put the qaraq (mountain sorrel) leaves in cotton cloth from sugar or flour bags, suck them through the cotton till they aren't sour any more. You find the leaves at the foot of mountains or cliffs where bird-droppings enrich the earth. Then put the sucked leaves in with seal blubber and blood and eat it.

Most mushrooms, mosses, and lichens (except rock tripe which can be boiled and eaten) are not now commonly eaten. However the caribou eat them, and the stomach contents of caribou are still eaten, mainly among older people. In many senses, the community of Panniqtuuq includes the environment, its animals and plants. Animals are respected, and thanked when hunted and killed, as every part of their bodies is integrated into present-day life. The caribou is part of this network as it digests food for humans that humans cannot directly eat.

Peepeelie Kunilusie

I like caribou meat. It's less greasy than seal, with seal you get messy. The difference between seal and caribou: I don't eat seal fat raw, but caribou fat can make tunnu. When you are cooking seal meat, leave most of the seal blubber off, just have a little. For caribou you can eat the bone marrow, not with seal. Caribou and seal are equally good, but have just these two differences.

When I was growing up I lived in this camp. We would go by boat to another part of the land, and then climb the hill. The older people and children would stay behind, because the caribou were so far away, three nights away. We had to walk a long way. I was really good at walking to far places, it was the only way to get caribou. Once we reached the place where there was caribou, we would stay until we caught one. Dad would be the leader. He made it feel that there was nothing you couldn't do, because you had to go so far to get caribou. Because we had to walk so far we didn't bring a tent, so we put stones in a circle and ryukta or underbrush for bedding. I would be lying down watching the stars, and not tired, but having to go to sleep, and the small animal noises were scary because it wasn't in town, you know. I would always have to be near my dad when I was sleeping because I was afraid, when I woke up I saw my dad was already up and making tea. My dad would cook food for us from what we brought with us, fish, no tea or bannock. But it was fine, good for our bodies, we didn't know anything else.

But I don't mind southern foods, even though it is common to eat raw meat.

I was married, but he has passed away. When we first started being together we lived with his parents and they did the cooking. He was already a really good cook, I still remember the smell today. I remember when he went out hunting, I had to have something ready for him, and he liked my cooking very much, especially the bannock. It was very important to be able to cook, because women did cooking, cleaning and making dry. My favourite dish I got from him. You make caribou broth and dumplings or fresh seal meat. You make bannock mix and put it into the caribou broth. My worst meal was male seals into aged meat and they smell, a really bad smell. We used to do it a lot but not so much these days.

Aged meat raises a completely different set of issues around the preservation of food. In a society traditionally without a local shop, eating patterns follow times of lean and plenty that are directly tied to the hunters. Being able to preserve food for eating in lean times is important, and to a large extent answered by the long frozen winter. However, preserving foods through the warmer summer months (in Panniqtuuq it is on average 5-15C from June to early September), required the development of a different technology. The sea water was not concentrated enough for salt preservation, although there are a number of recipes that ask for seawater rinses or marinades for meats.

Louisa Angmarlik

Get caribou or seal and rinse in sea salt. Dry off and cover with spices you have in the kitchen. Keep the meat in the fridge for 24 hours and then take it out and dry it again. Put it in a pot with half salt water and half ordinary water, and let it boil.

Fish and thin strips of meat can be prepared and dried, and this is the most well-used method for preserving foods at the current time. But it is labour intensive and not something that there is time for on intensive hunts. Ageing meat is an alternative. The opening paragraph of 'The Science of Igunaq' comments: 'Although this food may not hold much appeal to many non-Inuit, its method of preparation does not differ much from those of cheese or sausage.'[17]

Ageing meat is a process that starts with the carcass of a freshly killed animal, seal, whale, walrus, or caribou. The animal is gutted and then

prepared in one of three main ways. It can simply be sewn up, or secured closed, and then covered with rocks to ensure that all the air is squashed out of the central cavity, and that other animals cannot get to it. Or, once gutted and cleaned, the soft organs can be replaced in the cavity before closing. Or the cavity can be filled with other small animals and birds, often the whole body. Over two to four months, depending on the temperature, the fat under the skin renders down and bastes the innards, preserving them and at the same time making them soft, so that in due course small bones, beaks, feathers can all be eaten, as well as the meat on the main carcass.

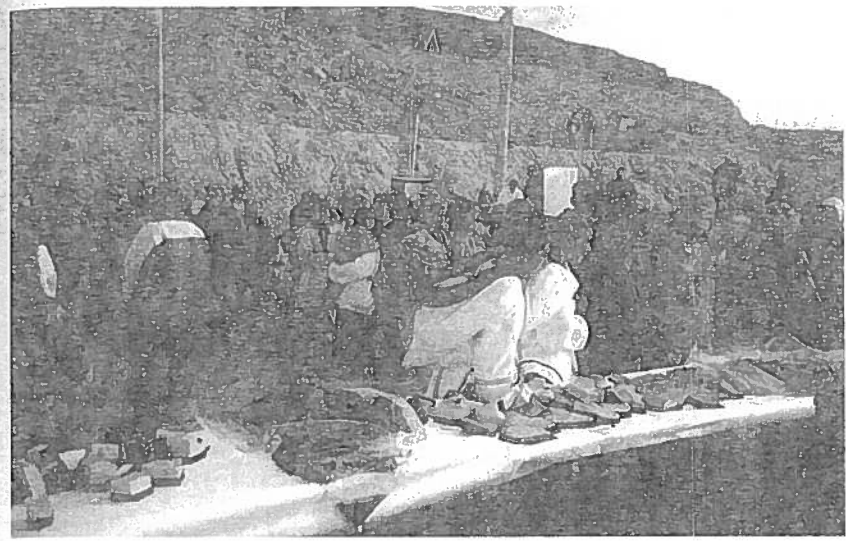
Louisa Angmarlik

I was there for a funeral, and the adults were eating frozen uncooked meat sitting on the floor. My kids sat there eating all different kinds of meat. Even aged meat – adults usually like it but the kids don't eat it. I encouraged my kids to eat it. Some people say 'you shouldn't eat it, you're just a kid' but kids have mouths too, and they can eat what they want. I let my kids eat whatever they want to because I want them to want the traditional foods when they get older.

Seal flipper is good aged, and muktuk. You leave it outside and it gets very smelly. It smells terrible, but tastes very good. The Elder men make it. Walrus is good aged.

However, the traditional foods have their own problems. They are ecologically efficient but also worrying in the context of circumpolar contaminants. PCBs and other contaminants swirl up over the arctic ice cap and are dropped on the ice, to melt down with the sun in the summer and flow into the rivers. There they become part of a chain of contamination from algae, plankton, shrimp, fish and sea mammals to bear and caribou and land animals. Bears are at the top of the chain, and many people no longer eat bear because of a fear of high concentrations of poisons. Since 1992 at least, various governments have turned to the elders in communities across the north in an attempt to monitor the changes to the environment. Quite apart from the importance of sustaining tradition, to avoid the transfats and sugars of southern foods, people need to be able to turn confidently to traditional foods. As the Nunavut Wildlife Health Assessment Project, a recent initiative in 2003, notes, 'The contaminant levels in country food are still low enough not to cause any immediate harm. Studies are showing the health benefits of eating country food far outweigh the risks from contaminants.'[18]

When I revisited Panniqtuuq in 2005 I was invited to stay with Noah and Aluki Mituq. They had invited me to take part in a camping trip on the land, but I was held up by weather in Iqaluit for several days and missed the departure. In fact I was so late that I arrived only three days



before they returned, with their family and that of Peter Kulchyski. They had been lucky, sighting a beluga whale, finding ptarmigan eggs, catching a seal, many arctic char, and on the way back stopping on an island, climbing a hill and walking, everyone, including five children, on a successful caribou hunt. The story not only had resonances with many of the stories I had heard, some from many years ago, some from more recent times, it also illustrated, if I may use the word this way, many of the prints that are produced by the Uqqurmiut workshop[19] in the Hamlet. It had been a classic hunt, after which Aluki prepared the sealskin for making into shoes or some other article of clothing, or to sell, and from which they brought back a caribou that Noah skinned and cut up, ready to share with others.

Included in the sharing, I was treated to caribou tongue, caribou stew, and arctic char. What I was advised to do in response was to take the entire family to Grandma's Kitchen for take-out burgers, which I did. And while the Mituqs' kitchen was suddenly invaded by many small people and some larger ones wanting to enjoy the company around burgers and fries, Noah and I ate arctic char. What is striking is that, no matter what the foodstuff or the food pathway, the people of Panniqtuuq come together frequently and with enthusiasm around food. The Northern store for example is packed from 8.30 a.m. to 10 a.m. with people dropping in to the Quikstop for coffee, tea, and a muffin, or breakfast: a community breakfast that reminded me of my first visit to Panniqtuuq, during the whale hunt of 1998.

For only the second time in nearly fifty years, in 1998, one circumpolar community was allowed to hunt a bowhead whale. The combination of traditional skills in the Panniqtuuq community with the modern fish-packing plant[20] made for a highly successful event. The government bodies in Ottawa and Iqaluit sent representatives, many of the other Nunavut communities sent members of the community, and everybody in Panniqtuuq, absolutely everybody it seemed, came down to the harbour and took part in eating the whale. It was a particularly important event, but an event only on a larger scale to having tea in the Quikstop or sharing caribou and arctic char.

The Inuit are a people well-known for their ability to respond to change. One challenge now has to be the cleft stick in which they find themselves with regard to traditional and southern foods. Finding the new balance is not easy although it is done with skill and humour. I leave you with another story.

Louisa Angmarlik

Me and my best friend stayed up all night, it was spring and we stayed up and about 3 a.m. we were watching TV with my mum and everyone upstairs, and we saw a commercial with a white person talking non-stop and, then, she ate pizza and 'stopped'!

So we had to make a pizza, to copy the commercial. It was my first pizza, but I just had to copy. I was very careful to follow the rules. The pizza was dry and hard, overcooked, but still we just copied the commercial. We were talking in Inuktitut and then we took a bite of pizza and 'stopped' talking right away. It was so funny.

Everyone else was asleep. Imagine what you would think, asleep in the house where a pizza is being cooked in the middle of the night!

NOTES

1. The research for this paper was conducted through Nunavut Research Institute Licence: 0101900N-A.
2. The non-aboriginal population is around 70 out of 1,280, but in the summer months in particular there are many people visiting on the their way to and from the Auyuittuq National Park.
3. Aaju Peter, who lives in Iqaluit and has brought up four children often on her own, said she depended on a neighbour who hunted.
4. The concept is built into the government statement of principles, Inuuqatigiittiarniq: Healthy Communities, in Pinasuaqtavut 2004-9.
5. Aboriginal Business Cases Studies in Canada, *The Informal Economy of Baffin Island: Sharing Practices of Yesterday and Today*, University of Manitoba, Department of Native Studies collections. www.ic.gc.ca/business/lect4.html
6. As above.
7. Interview with Rosie Veevee, July 2000. Interviewers and translators working with the Trent University Summer Session in Pangnirtung, organized by Peter Kulchyski.
8. As above.
9. The phrase 'above the treeline' in Canada denotes the land incapable of sustaining trees because of the lack of soil and inclement weather. This area includes the northeastern part of mainland Canada, the northern islands, and small area of northwestern Quebec. Apart from this latter area, most of the land is now governed by the Territory of Nunavut.
10. H.V. Kuhnlein and R. Soueida, 'Use and Nutrient Composition of Traditional Baffin Inuit Foods', *Journal of Food Composition and Analysis,* 5 (1992) 112-26.
11. Much of the following information comes from the website of the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, which has been the organizing body representing Inuit people, not only to the Canadian government but within the Circumpolar conference, and negotiating over the formation of Nunavut as a Territory: <http://www.itk.ca/environment/wildlife-walrus.php>, accessed 23 January 2006.
12. Carole Blanchet, Eric Dewailly, Pierre Ayotte, Suzanne Bruneau, et al, 'Contribution of selected traditional and market foods to the diet of nunavik inuit women', *Canadian Journal of Dietetic Practice and Research,* Summer 2000.
13. Among other cookbooks that have incorporated traditional foods in Nunavut are: *Qikiqtamiut Cookbook* (Municipality of Sanikiluaq, 2000), and the *Caribou Cookbook*, (Whale Cove, Keewatin Regional Health Board).
14. *Mamaqtut: Inuit Healthy Living Cookbook*, Tungasuvvingat Inuit, Urban Inuit Diabetes Awareness and Prevention Program. Ottawa: March 2004: <http://www.inuitdiabetes.ca/mamaqtut_cookbook_final.pdf>, accessed 26 January 2006.
15. Much of this information about small plants came from Adam Mituq, who also told me about many other plants that I have not been able to identify, such as qonulik. See also J. Stevens, J Palliser, H. Oweetaltuk, *Traditional Medicine Project* (Avataq Cultural Institute, 1984).
16. Saila Nakashuk talked about this way of eating koahlie. I was not able to identify the plant, although Peepeelie Kunilusie said there were many of them in the graveyard. Unfortunately, although I searched there, I missed them, not being familiar with what they looked like.
17. See the website for The Environmental Resources for Northern Canada http://www.eenorth.com/eenorth/details. cfm?territory=nu&entry=215, accessed 25 January 2006.
18. See the World Wildlife fund website: <http://www.wwf.ca/satellite/wwfkids/nwhp_trk.html>, accessed 27 January 2006.
19. See the website: <http://www.uqqurmiut.com>.
20. The packing plant exports turbot, Greenland halibut, Greenland shark, arctic char, northern shrimp and sea scallops to Japan and North America. After the whale hunt they packed up whale meat into containers that were sent out around the circumpolar region to communities for whom the bowhead whale is traditionally significant.