

# Stories



Someone who cared about their language  
asked one of these hunters,  
“What will you do when you get out of hospital?”  
“Oh, you must know that I sit waiting for the moon  
to turn back for me so that I can go to my home and  
listen again to the stories of my people.  
Oh that I could sit again listening to the stories  
which come from a great distance.  
For this is the time for telling stories.  
First I must sit cooling my arms so that the tiredness  
can go out of me, and then I must listen, waiting  
for the story to come, for the story I want to hear.  
The mountains may be between us but I will turn  
around on my feet. I will turn back on my tracks and,  
listening, open my ears to feel the story that comes  
in on the wind. Oh that I may listen again  
to the story that is the wind.”  
Now this comes straight out of the Stone Age heart.  
He was homesick above all,  
not for his people, not for his country even,  
but for the stories of this people.

*Mary Panegoosho in Where are the Stories of My People?'*

# Stories

Rasmussen, Intellectual Culture of the Copper Eskimos

Uqsuralik Ottokie<sup>1</sup>

Rasmussen, Intellectual Culture of the Copper Eskimos

We also included three versions of the same story, *Inukpak: Inukpak*, told by George Kuptana, *Inukpak The Giant*, told by Helen Paungat and *Inugpasugssuk*, a Netsilik story retold by Howard Norman. It might be interesting to compare the three versions. How is the storyline the same or different? What is the difference in the style of writing? What do you notice when you compare Inuit oral stories to the usual style of written English? How do you think the translation affects the story?

<sup>1</sup> From *Childrearing Practices, Interviewing Inuit Elders Series*, with Naqi Ekho and Uqsuralik Ottokie, published by Nunavut Arctic College, 2000

These stories might inspire you to talk to people in your community to find out if any similar stories exist. People in your group could each choose a story that they would like to tell in Inuktitut or Inuinnaqtun. This is a great way to build confidence and language skills. You could practise the story until you are comfortable with it and then tell it to your own children or to small groups of children.

Enjoy the stories!

# Catching Geese: Kalgiks

Told by Mackie Kaosoni, James Evetalegak and Jimmy Nakoyak<sup>1</sup>

It isn't easy to catch geese because they can run faster than a person, as well as fly away. The Inuit had a special way to catch geese a long time ago. You may have seen rocks piled in a certain way to build small corrals on the land around Cambridge Bay. These are very old and I will explain how they were used.

Our ancestors would pile rocks to make a stone house that they could gather geese into. The geese had to be tricked into entering this kalgik, or stone house, by having a person who could lead them by honking the same way a goose does. Have you tried to imitate geese? It is not easy for everyone to do well, but when it works, the geese can be trapped in the stone house with their human leader. Once the geese follow their decoy into the kalgik, another person would block the entrance and then it was easy to kill them for food.

I have heard that the geese were killed by twisting their necks and then throwing the dead birds up and over the walls of the kalgik. I have never heard of using clubs on the birds. This is how I have heard geese were hunted in the olden times, but I myself have never hunted them that way.

Another part of the hunt started before herding the geese into a kalgik. The Inuit used their qajaqs to herd the geese from the water to the land first. I don't know how many qajaqs were needed for this. After the geese started walking on the land, then the Inuit would walk them towards the kalgik.

I think this way of hunting geese could be a lot of fun instead of shooting them with guns the way we do today.

<sup>1</sup> From *Inukkaknailak and Other Stories*, produced by Kitikmeot Heritage Society and published by Nunavut Arctic College

# The Hunting of Walrus

Two men were going qajaqing on the sea to hunt for sea mammals. They would watch for the mammal's head to bob up for breath. As they went along the men spotted many walruses. They paddled over closer to where some could be seen surfacing, and the hunt was on.

My generation has all heard this story and has learned its valuable information. These days, young boys and teenagers are not fully equipped because they have not heard all there is to know. Let this lesson of old be heard by the young now.

When a walrus is eating, one must not ride above it. He will rise suddenly and capsize the boat. That even happened to a qallunaaq once. He rode above the eating walrus and, sure enough, he capsized.

So it went that one of the hunters rode above a walrus. The walrus rose quickly and turned the man's qajaq over. The irritated walrus embraced the man and brought him under water. The other man rushed to the scene and waited, hoping the walrus would bring the man back up. The walrus came up again, all right, but would soon plunge below again.

The man who was waiting was a shaman and tried to get the walrus to release his companion. The walrus rose once again, this time closer to the waiting man. Ah, but swiftly he plunged back under with his captive.

The concerned shaman began to conjure up a spell to have the walrus release his friend. Then the submerged walrus quickly reappeared and let the hunter go! Once the released man was clear, the shaman went over to rescue him from the water. He piled him up onto his qajaq and together they headed for shore. They did not catch the walrus.

I don't know the names of these people who had this encounter with the walrus. This is a story that is passed down for young people, and adults too, to learn its lesson.

<sup>1</sup> Printed with thanks to the family of Tautunngi and to Tamalik Janet McGrath

# Ikaluakpalik

Told by Donald Kogvik, Elder, Gjoa Haven, Nunavut

## Ikaluakpalik: Place Where There are Big Fish<sup>1</sup>

I will tell you a story that has been told by the Inuit from long ago and passed on by parents to their children. I myself am not sure what everything in the story means; I can only tell it as I have heard it because I was not there to see the things in the story. Perhaps if I had lived in the long ago and been there, I could be sure I was telling the story correctly.

To understand the story, you must picture how a fish could be big enough to swallow two men who had tied their qajaqs together to make a raft. This way of traveling on water was good for balance to prevent tipping over. When crossing a creek or river it was good to make this kind of raft-like boat.

It is told that these two qajaqs and the men were swallowed all at once by a very big fish.

The big fish lived on this lake and also appeared to a woman who was frightened by it. She was on the shore doing her work alone or perhaps getting water for her camp when suddenly a beautiful looking hill seemed to form in the lake and grow bigger as it came towards her. It was a fish so big that it looked like a hill to her because this is what she thought it must be at first. So huge! This is how I have heard it told. The woman grew afraid and ran away. Something beautiful became something terrible.

I think what she saw must have had a dark color, or shades of gray and black because she was looking at a lake. This could explain why she thought it looked like a hill.

<sup>1</sup> From *Inukkaknailak and Other Stories*, produced by Kitikmeot Heritage Society and published by Nunavut Arctic College

# Inuaguliit: Little People

Told by George Kuptana, Elder, Bay Chimo, Nunavut<sup>1</sup>

Do you want to hear stories about the little people? The little people and how they live? Any little things left behind when Inuit travel and move between camps will be touched by the little people.

This is what they were called a long time ago: little people. They were brother and sister, grandchild and grandparents all living together in a time when people got old very quickly. The little people would seek shelter in the things left behind by Inuit as they moved camps.

The little people were powerful and strong. They used polar bears to pull their sleds when they traveled. Their sleds were made out of stone. They were called little tiny people, these people who travelled in sleds made from very heavy rock. They had tremendous strength according to the stories told about them.

Once the little people decided to camp and spend the night under the cover of some camping gear that had been left by people who had moved on. They ate some cooked caribou meat that they had with them. When they traveled they would carry food with them rather than hunt along the way. They had young polar bears to use as dogs and to pull their sleds.

The next morning after they woke up they decided to load up their sleds after eating breakfast. While they were loading their heavy stone sleds, the old woman spit on the chest of a caribou that had been left under cover in the camp. She spit on the chest because she wanted to eat it. She didn't need any help, but she had a hard time carrying the meat she took out by herself. She said to her husband, "Take this, it's too heavy for me." "Take this, it's too heavy," she said again. Her husband replied, "If it's too heavy, then leave it here."

In fact, it was too heavy and so they did leave it there. The old woman did not like leaving the meat behind that she had spat on, but it was too much of a load even though she had wanted it for her food.

<sup>1</sup> From *Inukkaknailak and Other Stories*, produced by Kitikmeot Heritage Society and published by Nunavut Arctic College





# The Inukkaknailak People

Told by George Kuptana, Elder, Bay Chimo, Nunavut<sup>1</sup>

A very long time ago there were hardly any people around and life was very hard. This was the way that it was and this is the story I have heard. My story may sound like the parts of a dream as I remember them.

Inukkaknailak were the people. They were called by this name because whenever they met other people on a trail they would just kill them for no reason. I will tell you about one of these people and how the Inukkaknailak got their name when the Inuit started to realize that there were Inuit in the world.

One Inukkaknailak kept two dogs on the floor of his iglu. He would welcome travellers by killing them. When a traveller came into his camp, the traveller would usually see the Inukkaknailak without clothing on. When the Inukkaknailak saw that he had company, he would get dressed up and then start to wrestle with his visitor until he killed him. He killed him right there in his iglu.

Meanwhile this Inukkaknailak person had told his dogs they could have the blood of the man who had been killed. Near one dog there was a bone that looked like a shoulder blade. I think this must have really been a shoulder blade because that is what was used as a tool for cutting things up in earlier times.

As soon as the Inukkaknailak had cut the dead person with the shoulder blade knife, blood flowed, and the dogs started licking it up. They licked the blood up quickly, the dogs of this Inukkaknailak.

The next day another traveller came to visit. This man had clothing that made him look like the common loon. Inside the iglu, the son of the Inukkaknailak really wanted to get this man for himself. The father realized this and immediately got up and began to dress himself even faster – this man with two dogs on his floor who tracked and sniffed for blood.

The traveller with common loon clothing was seen by the Inukkaknailak. He was a common loon, and he had beautiful clothing. The traveller entered the iglu and removed his clothing and put them on the icy floor so he would not slip and fall, this man with the common loon clothing.

<sup>1</sup> From *Inukkaknailak and Other Stories*, produced by Kitikmeot Heritage Society and published by Nunavut Arctic College

There were several people in the iglu when the common loon man met the Inukkaknailak who was now fully dressed and ready. The traveller saw a young man sitting in the room who went to grab the cutting tool made from a shoulder bone. At this point the Inukkaknailak leader warned the visitor by saying, “No, no, no, watch out, that young man is just about to kill you!”

The people in the iglu were very scared now. The visitor said, “What, what my younger brother, he actually just about killed *you*!” Oh, I almost forgot to tell you that the Inukkaknailak man also said, “The dog was just about to taste your blood!” and the common loon man said, “They could taste *your* blood instead!”

These two brothers started to wrestle with each other. The common loon man killed the Inukkaknailak man and the dogs began to lick his blood, the blood that was trickling onto the floor. The dogs began to lick this blood which they had been raised to like.

Now the common loon man asked the other people present who among them were killers. He managed to get rid of all the killers. Ever since this time there have been no more Inukkakkailak people. You see, the common loon man had come to visit his younger brother in the land where he made his home, this man with the common loon clothing.

Long ago there were a lot of stories, stories about many different animals. Today I don't know how it is, perhaps there are stories today, but I don't know what else to say... wait a minute, I will tell more stories in a minute. I will tell some stories but they seem always ready to disappear from my memory...

# Inukpak

Told by George Kuptana, Elder, Bay Chimo, Nunavut<sup>1</sup>

I need a little time to tell some more stories. I find that they seem to disappear from my memory and I need time to hold onto them. This is a story about a little person and two giants. A long time ago two giants lived underneath a tree where they would fall asleep together lying next to each other. A little person approached them with a rock for throwing in his hand. He was either very brave or very foolish because he planned to climb up on the huge people who were sleeping. If he woke the giants up it would not go well for him.

The small person got a better idea after he picked up a rock for throwing. He decided to climb up the tree instead of the giants. He threw his rock at one of the huge people lying below. The rock woke up the one giant who got angry with the other giant. He hit the other giant and said, "What are you doing to me? What have you done to me?" They then settled down and went back to sleep.

Next the little person threw another rock at the second giant lying beneath the tree. Now this giant woke up angry and he yelled at the other giant next to him, "What are you doing throwing rocks at me?" He was mad and he hit the other giant. Once more they settled down and went to sleep.

The little person threw another stone at the first giant he had attacked. This time the giant woke up in a rage and he started to attack the other giant beside him. They started wrestling with each other using all of their giant strength. They were so angry that they killed each other in the struggle.

They killed each other because each one thought the other was bothering him on purpose. In reality it was the little person in the tree who was responsible. He had hit them with stones and carefully waited to make them attack each other.

The little person went home to his camp and told his people that he had killed the two giants with his own hands. He really knew that they had killed each other, but he didn't tell this to anyone.

When the people from his camp went to see what he had done to the two giants, they were amazed and surprised to see how such a small person could have enough strength to kill two giants!

<sup>1</sup> From *Inukpaknailak and Other Stories*, produced by Kitikmeot Heritage Society and published by Nunavut Arctic College

# Inukpak ‘The Giant’

Told by Helen Paungat, Elder, Arviat, Nunavut<sup>1</sup>

Once someone met a giant who was jigging for fish beside two steep ridges that we call Kitingujaajuak and Kitingujaanaq. He had an adopted son. The giant told his son, “When I go to sleep, it will be for a very long time and I won’t be easy to wake up. So when you do try to wake me, place a slab of stone on my forehead and pound me with it.” The giant also told his son that one day a huge polar bear would appear. This polar bear would be so huge that it would block the view between the two ridges, which were quite far apart.

As soon as the huge polar bear appeared, the adopted son started pounding the giant’s forehead with the slab of stone. But the giant kept right on sleeping. The son kept trying desperately to wake the giant for the polar bear was approaching fast. The giant finally woke up, grabbed his bow and arrows, placed the son in his big pouch, and started running after the bear. The giant eventually caught and killed the bear.

A few days later the same giant (or maybe another one) met a very small man jigging for fish. Beside him was a huge white whale and its baby. The giant asked the little man for a small piece of meat from the whale. Being a very stingy little man, he said, “No, that’s for my wife.” The giant and the little man began to argue and eventually started fighting. The little man, who was no match for the giant, was soon knocked down and began shouting for help.

As soon as the little man’s wife heard him calling, she started running to help him. She was a huge woman and was breastfeeding her baby when she heard the call. Her breasts were hanging out as she started to run and she ended up dropping the baby in the snow. Because the woman with her breasts hanging out was so hard for the giant to hold on to, she almost overpowered the giant and his adopted son. The giant told his son to cut off the woman’s breasts. They had a hard time killing the woman because she was so huge. After they had managed to kill her, they went looking for the baby she had been feeding.

<sup>1</sup> From *Recollections of Helen Paungat, A Life in the Keewatin*, ICI Autobiography Series, published by Inuit Cultural Institute, 1988

The giant and his son found the iglu that the little man and his huge wife had been living in. Their children, who were in the iglu, became afraid when they saw the giant. Some of them tried to get away by climbing the rope that their father used to exercise on. The others scrambled everywhere, trying to hide on the bed. I don't think the children were killed because they were just too young. The giant and the son noticed that there was a lot of food stacked up against the wall of the igloo, which left them wondering why the little man was so stingy.



## Netsilik Inuit Story, Retold by Howard Norman<sup>1</sup>

Another time Inugpasugssuk raised a wave that flooded the whole district of Arviligjuaq. As usual he was out sealing when he accidentally struck his own penis; it had shot up out of the water but was so far away that he thought it was a seal putting its head up. The pain made him tumble over backward so that he sat down, and that movement raised a sea that went right in over the land.

Inugpasugssuk was very fond of humans and often camped close to where they were. He once fell in love with an Inuk woman and exchanged wives with her husband. The arrangement turned out so badly, however, that Inugpasugssuk never tried it again. The Inuk man who was lying with Inugpasugssuk's wife fell into her genitals and never came up again. He dissolved inside her and his bones came out with her urine. But the Inuk woman with whom Inugpasugssuk was lying was split right across and died.

Inugpasugssuk was sorry he had killed a human. To console himself he adopted a human son and reared him in such a manner that he grew and grew and became much bigger than humans usually grow. The foster son helped the giant with all kinds of work. When evening came and the giant lay down to sleep, he loved to be loused, but his foster son, who was afraid to take the big lice out with his naked hands, always wore mittens when he loused him.

One evening, it is said, the giant gave his foster son two stones, a small one and a big one, and said to him, "Tonight I expect that big game will come to our house. If a bear should appear in the ravine you must awaken me, and you must do it by first knocking on my head with the little stone. If I don't wake up, take the big stone and thump my head with it."

Then the giant lay down to sleep and the foster son kept a lookout through the window.

It was not long before a big bear appeared away up the ravine, and at once the son knocked his foster father on the head with the small stone. The giant woke up, saw the bear, and laughed heartily, saying, "Yes, but that's only a fox."

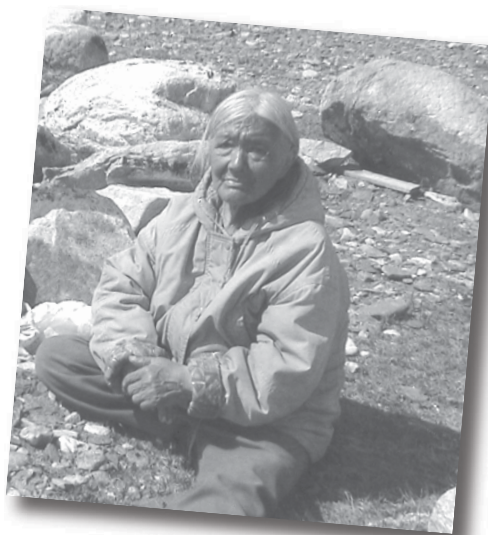
Nevertheless he went out and killed it, and lay down to sleep again. The boy kept watch again, and it was not long before another animal appeared, and this time it was so big that it turned quite dark in the ravine. Once more the foster son took the small stone and hit the giant's head with it. But by this time the giant had become sleepy, and as he did not wake up quickly enough, the boy seized the big stone and began to hammer away at his temples with it. Only then did he awake.



As he looked up towards the ravine, a slight shiver passed through his great body; it was hunting ardour, and he said, “ Yes, this time it’s a real bear,” and placing his foster son in the strap around his kamik, he ran out and killed the bear.

Once Inugpasugssuk’s foster son wanted to visit his family, but as they lived far away and he did not know the way, the giant gave him his magic wand, saying, “Every evening, when you lie down to sleep, you must stick this wand into the ground. When you wake up, it will always have fallen over and will be pointing in the direction you have to go.”

And it happened as the giant had said, and the foster son safely reached his old village. But it is told that he had now grown so tall that he could no longer get into the houses of humans. So he soon went back to the giant, and since then nothing has been heard of him.



# Kuukjuak Hunting Story

Told by Donald Kogvik, Gjoa Haven, Nunavut<sup>1</sup>

I will tell you about the time when Inuit last used qajaqs in this area and when I learned about using a qajaq in my youth. I can remember the first time I had seen a qajaq made by Inuit. Angulalik had bought a qajaq made by Kupluguk and Flagstaff Island was the place where we practiced rowing and handling a qajaq. The men rowing their qajaqs in the harbour fascinated me. I decided to try it myself, and so I climbed into the qajaq and tried to paddle away from the land and out to the open water. I almost tipped over and got quite scared. I barely made it back to land without an accident in the water. I vowed that day that I would never go on a qajaq again! But time passed and my attitude about the qajaq changed.

We had spring camps at Kulgajuk (Foggy Bay) with my parents and my in-laws, Alikamik's. There was a young man named Nahaklulik. Alikamik made him a qajaq that was short and close fitting around the waist. I tried this qajaq without fear because I had already tried Angulalik's qajaq. This was my second experience and I enjoyed myself. I used Nahaklulik's qajaq to search for caribou near Kulgajuk.

I found and shot two bull caribou on that trip. I removed their hides and butchered them. I then cut them into pieces so that I could pile them onto the qajaq. This was difficult because the qajaq was small and narrow. I put the hindquarters on the back and used rope all around the qajaq to tie the pieces on so they wouldn't fall off. I also put some of the meat inside. The result was that the qajaq was barely able to float above the surface of the water. As I was loading the meat I had to keep getting on myself to see how much weight I was adding in total so I could be sure of remaining afloat. I was able to butcher only one of the caribou and put it on the qajaq without sinking. I was only a few inches above the water now.

I started to paddle towards home not knowing that my father-in-law, Alikamik, was worried about my safety because I had been gone for quite a while by this time. He had set out in search of me in his qajaq. I had to use all of my strength to paddle in my overloaded qajaq. As I paddled I had to check that I was still floating above the water's surface. At times the qajaq would disappear beneath the water as I paddled. When I paddled harder, the more I felt I was making myself sink and when I stopped paddling, I felt like I was floating on air with my waistline right at the water's edge.

<sup>1</sup> From *Inukknailak and Other Stories*, produced by Kitikmeot Heritage Society and published by Nunavut Arctic College

I know that our ancestors used qajaqs a lot. Qajaqs were useful for searching for game and for hunting tuktu (caribou). Caribou could be speared from a qajaq.

The Inuit did not only use harpoons with steel tips to hunt caribou; they also used wooden spears. Caribou are known to cross rivers in large herds and seals are known to go in large groups to the shores of islands. This is when a qajaq would be used for hunting. When the caribou started their crossing, hunters would row towards them and spear them in the back while they were crossing. I have not experienced this personally, so I can only say what I have heard. Likewise for seal hunting, I haven't heard personally of anyone using qajaqs for seal hunting, but it seems probable to me that they would have done this.

Seal hunting required both special training and equipment. In our area Inuit didn't use the term 'seal hunting in the winter' because they hunted year round with harpoons. In the spring time when seals started lying by their holes and ice started flowing down the rivers, the Inuit around here would use their harpoons near the seals' holes and call this 'aiming for seal using harpoon'. This was the practice in the springtime for seal hunting. The Inuit had a way of thinking about seasons that reflected our way of life on the land.

Frank Analok, an Elder from Cambridge Bay, said that the Elders before him had used the moon as their calendar to tell when the seasons were changing. He described the seasons with words that tell what happened and what needed to be done in each part of the year.

February/March .....	Avuniukvik (season between winter and spring)
March/April .....	Halunngnakvik (time to air skins outside iglus)
April/May.....	Nauvik/Naujalikvik (first sight of seagulls, snowbuntings)
June/July .....	Kaumanik (24 hour daylight)
July/August .....	Maujakvik (fish heading up river)
Sept/October .....	Amiraijakvik (shedding of fur/rutting season of animals)
October/November .....	Ukiakhak
December/January.....	Ukia
February/March .....	Ukiu
April/May.....	Upinngakhak
June/July .....	Upinngua /Aujakhak
August/September .....	Auja

This is the way the Inuit understood the changes in the world around them.

When seal hunters catch a seal out on the sea ice, they eat the liver as a delicacy while it is still warm. The liver is taken out through a small hole cut near the stomach. A special tool was used to make several small holes on the seal's skin so the skin could be pinned together using this tool and thus prevent the blood and meat from coming out of the animal.

A seal hunting kit was carried in the coldest months while hunting. This included an indicator that could be set up in the seal's hole to tell when there was a seal below ready to pop up. The indicator was made of antlers tied with a sinew and put down to the bottom of the seal hole. The bottom of the hole would be thin ice that had recently frozen. When the seal rises, the indicator would rise with the water and tell when the seal is there. The indicator would go up and tell the hunter where the seal is.

A special bag made from caribou skins would be made to hold the bones, swan feathers, and other tools used for hunting seals. These tools could also be attached to the back of a caribou skin parka with a button so that you could reach behind you to get them. These tools were awesome to see. I myself have not used a lot of these tools and have only heard about them.

The way to hunt seals long ago required the hunter to stand using his harpoon. Hunters would make chairs of snow blocks while they waited for seals to show up. I remember once sitting on such a chair and feeling sleepy. I tried hard to stay awake but I fell asleep without realizing it. The next thing I heard was a big crash when I fell over and hit the snow. I got scared because I didn't know what happened at first; I only heard the noise from my own fall.

Caribou were usually hunted by looking for their crossing places, rather than using blinds. Inuksuks would mark these places where long ago hunters had used qajaqs where the caribou crossed water. A hunter would try to use his spear according to a tradition rather than just stabbing anywhere. If a caribou was to the right of you, you wouldn't use your left hand to stab it because this could tip you over. If the caribou is on your right, you should use your right hand to spear it so the qajaq will remain stable.

*Note: Excellent story to teach Archimedes' principle of flotation and the physics of buoyancy.*



# The Little Old Woman

Told by Tautunngi, Elder, Rankin Inlet, Nunavut. Recorded and Translated by Tamalik Janet McGrath<sup>1</sup>

There used to be a gathering made up of all the neighbouring women of a specific area or camp. This was because men would often sleep over many nights on their usual hunting trips. Once they were properly outfitted with boots and mittens, they were off again to their strenuous work. In summertime, too, the men would want to collect various plants for winter food and other uses. Once winter set in they would strive again in their search for animals. It was their constant struggle and they would often camp over many nights during their hunt.

There was a big community of people with many tents. Only women were inhabiting it at the time for, as usual, the men were out. On this occasion the men were making preparations in anticipation of the onset of winter, the season when animals were scarce. This very large fellowship of women had an old woman who was a shaman of sorts. This old woman was very, very tiny. Her neighbours, her juniors, all knew that she was a shaman.

They had been alone for a long time when, one night, they heard wolf cries. It was a very large number of wolves that were heard howling. Out of fear, the women all gathered in the largest tent of the lot for it was pitch black. There was nothing for them to do in defence, they had no flood light and no hunting weapon (they were all women). You see, packs of wolves of this kind are to be feared, the kind with very little fur.

When it was evident that this type of wolf had come to their camp, some said, “Our little old woman most likely could tell what the wolves were doing. Put her ceremonial fringe belt on! Put her ceremonial fringe belt on! See if she can stop them.”

So they gathered in the tent and banged items together to create noise. The old lady’s answer was, “No, though I pity you dearly, I doubt that I can help you.”

They responded by saying that even if she couldn’t protect them, at least she should try. So they arranged her ceremonial charms and fringe belt and amulets on her. They urged her to try and find out, “Before they come in too close in proximity, just give it a try.” They were about to be finished off, eaten by the wolves.

<sup>1</sup> Printed with thanks to the family of Tautunngi and to Tamalik Janet McGrath

So there they were, gathered in the largest tent. When we would be inland hunting in the summer, our only source of light would be a precious little candle and a small amount of lard. That is all that the women had for light. They were gathered there with their tiny source of light. Then the shaman spoke, telling them to completely shut the light out; she would be the only source of light. Then she carefully lit a piece of moss which she held. She instructed them to completely darken the tent. The darkness caused a wave of fear and confusion for a moment as they realized they would be working in the dark. She warned that it would not work if anyone banged to make noise or struck a light again. She said she would give it a try. It didn't take much to convince them to listen to her.

Then the air filled with wolf sounds. She went out and walked behind and around the many tents. Her singing and the tread of her feet could be heard the whole while. She had ordered no banging and absolutely no one banged. Finally there were signs of her return and soon she stood at the door. Her little light, her guiding light, had not snuffed out and she entered with it. She said that it would be okay to light up the candle and they did so. When the place was brightened, she said, "I doubted if this little person could do it, for I am very, very poor and helpless. Have someone go out. No noise will be heard. You won't hear anything. Have someone come near the door and listen for some sound. Go just in the front area of the tent where there aren't so many tracks." More than one went because they were all afraid.

To the south there were sounds of water gushing and then the sound of water streaming. The ones out there listening were not believed, so many more came out and they all listened. The sound of streaming water to the rear of the tent disappeared as it went away.

Apparently, the little woman turned those wolves into a stream of water. The tiny old woman was surely not the biggest of them. This very tiny little old lady proved to be talented. She had no immediate family and few friends. She had a tent all to herself. This little one protected the whole camp of younger women.



# A Man With Two Wives

Told by George Kuptana, Elder, Bay Chimo, Nunavut

*My stories come from a long time ago when I was growing up and changing from a boy to a man. I will slowly tell these stories which were told to me by my relatives through marriage, in-laws, and some fox trappers.*

*The stories I will tell come from the time before qablunaat, the white man. These stories are good for animals to hear so that you can catch them when you go along and trap. That's when they were told, when you went along trapping...*

A man once had two wives and lived with them near a small lake. Whenever the husband went out hunting, the two wives would go to the shore of the small lake. Here they would take off all of their clothes and then begin to sing:

“Penis appear, penis appear. These vaginas are now open by the shore of the lake. Penis show up, penis show up!”

As soon as the penis appeared, the two wives would wade down into the water and the penis would begin having sexual intercourse with the two women.

When they were finished, the women went home to their tent. The hunter also went to their tent after he had finished hunting.

A few days later the husband went out to hunt, but this time he went to hunt for his two wives. As soon as the husband left, the two wives went back to the small lake, as was their habit. After they had removed their clothes, they once again began to sing:

“Penis show up, penis show up; our vaginas are now open by the shore of the lake. Penis appear, penis appear!”

Once again, when the penis appeared, the women waded into the water and the penis started to have sex with them again. When they were finished the wives went home.

They were using the penis in the lake as their own husband.

<sup>1</sup> From *Inukkaknailak and Other Stories*, produced by Kitikmeot Heritage Society and published by Nunavut Arctic College



After the man had finished his hunting of these wives he decided to return to the lake while his wives were sleeping. He went back to the same spot where he had been hiding and now he tried singing the song that the wives had sung:  
 “Penis show up, penis show up; these vaginas are now open by the shore of the lake. Penis appear!”

However, the penis did not appear at this time because he was not hungry for sex.

Now the hunter knew what was going on. The very next day the hunter left his two wives and went back to the lake. Again the hunter sang:  
 “Penis show up penis show up; these vaginas are now open by the shore of the lake.”

This time the penis was hungry and it appeared for him. The hunter waded down into the water of the lake and cut the penis off with a knife. He carried the penis from the small lake home to his wives and cooked it along with some other meat.

When he was done his cooking, he woke the women up so they could eat. He served himself first with real meat so he could feed the penis to his wives. Since he had done the cooking he could serve the penis to his wives.

When they had finished eating, the women said, “Where did you catch this? Where did you catch such wonderful tasty meat?”

The hunter replied, “That was the penis of your husband who comes from the lake you go to.” At this the women grew afraid because they were still naked in bed and the hunter knew their secret.

The hunter would not let them put their clothes back on as he had hidden their clothing earlier. The hunter gave them seaweed to sit on which he had gathered from the shore of the lake in a bag. Now after the women sat on the seaweed he had placed for their seats, they got worms from the seaweed. This made them sick and they started to cough and spit out mucus.

Perhaps this is how the cold got its beginning. These two wives may have caused it simply because they had started using a penis for a husband even though they had a good hunter for a real husband.

This is what I have heard.



# My Life: James Taipana

Autobiography by James Taipana, Elder, Baker Lake, Nunavut<sup>1</sup>

I can remember where I grew up. It is called Perry River. When I think about that place, many memories appear and touch me. Many times I have thought about going back to the land where I was raised. It is a place I carry within me that I will always feel I can go to and live on.

My parents taught me how to live on the land and hunt so I could survive in this place. It was where everything started for me.

I can remember our spring camps when we set up our home on tiny islands or on the side of the river as far upstream as the rapids in Ittimnigut. I camped in this area with Angulalik and his family. Later I will tell how I came to work for him.

When I was growing up, I did not go to Baker Lake but I did go as far as Perry River to trade. Later on I did move with my parents to Iqaluktuuttiaq, Cambridge Bay, and from there to Baker Lake on an aeroplane, and then we stayed.

My memories tell me how I grew up as a young man and learned to hunt and survive on the land. People came to our camping area at Perry River from Hanninngajuk (Garry Lake) to trade with us. More people came to stay after Ekvana and Angulalik were married. A man named Tapatai brought a missionary with him by dog team along with Utak and Ujuk. I was surprised to see how these people dressed. They wore different clothes from us. They had long trousers and stockings that were longer than ours. I wondered if their trousers were wide enough and I wondered if they were comfortable. I thought everyone in the world dressed the way we did until then.

I can tell you that my father's name was Utuugak, and my mother's name was Tikkikluk. I had brothers and sisters too and here are their names: Panaktannuak, the oldest one, then me, followed by another sister called Aulajuk, then Mingilgak, and last Ukalitana, the youngest.

<sup>1</sup> From *Inukkaknailak and Other Stories*, produced by Kitikmeot Heritage Society and published by Nunavut Arctic College

I know that my parents came from Ellice River and Kulgajuk and that I was born in Ellice River. Kuunajuk is where I learned how to hunt and survive. Here is where I became a young man, strong and able to do many things. A bride was chosen for me from the Perry River area, her name was Unnguk. I went to get her with my oldest brother Panaktannuak.

Now my life changed again, and I raised a family there with Unnguk. She was my first wife and we had five children. I will tell you how these children fared.

Two of them died before they lived very long. Our first child was Qulauhuq, a girl, followed by Amigainik and Tikkikluk who became the wife of Jimmy Wingneck. A fourth child was born the same day as Amigainiq; it was his twin brother. This brother was given to Huvak and Kanajuk to take care of as their own child. They adopted the child, but the baby could not breathe while he was asleep he suffocated and he died. A fifth child also suffocated just after being born, and so we had five children in all.

I worked with Angulalik when he first opened his trading post at Flagstaff Island. Ekvana said this happened when both of Angulalik's wives were still alive. I started my work by trading fox furs and helping him trade furs. Angulalik also took in Qablunaat and guided them in and out of the area. I stayed with him a long time, and only left when he was married to Ekvana and he decided to stop working. This was the beginning of his retirement.

I can remember travelling with Angulalik to Cambridge Bay on a ship in the summer time. I would still have kept working there if I had not gotten sick with

# Nukatpiak

Told by George Kuptana, Elder, Bay Chimo, Nunavut<sup>1</sup>

Nukatpiak was a young boy who lived a long time ago. He was preparing to go out hunting on foot as he packed his sleeping skin blankets. I can hold out my hand to the middle of my chest to show you how high he was. After a day's journey he decided where he would settle down for the night. He made his camp and unpacked his sleeping skins. While he was preparing his camp he was unaware that the Tulugarjuaq (Big Crow) were coming towards him. Nukatpiak settled down to sleep as the Tulugarjuaq approached him and began to fly in circles over his head in the air. One of the Tulugarjuaq cried out to his companions, "Look, there is someone lying dead down there, let's go and feast ourselves on human eyes tonight."

Apparently human eyes were a delicacy for the Tulugarjuaq. As soon as they had landed, one Tulugarjuaq rolled Nukatpiak over onto his back and prepared to feast on the young boy's eyes. Suddenly the boy came to life and made an unusual sound that startled the Tulugarjuaq enough so that he dropped his knife. The boy then picked up the knife and began to walk away. As Nukatpiak walked, the Tulugarjuaq flew in front of him and said, "I will show you where there is good hunting in exchange for my knife." As they went along and looked beyond the hills, the young boy saw animals grazing. Nukatpiak thought to himself that this was a good hunting ground, but he decided not to return the knife to Tulugarjuaq.

Some time later he returned to this hunting ground and again the Tulugarjuaq approached him and pleaded, "Together we can circle this area and find more game for you if only you will agree to give my knife back to me." The boy agreed and so they flew together and they saw animals. Suddenly Nukatpiak noticed arctic foxes, and again thinking only to himself Nukatpiak reflected, "This is exactly what I have been looking for." He was so pleased with the outcome of this flight that he agreed to return the knife to Tulugarjuaq.

He then returned home to plan his trapping season using the information he had gained. He trapped until early spring, until he realized that he had enough fox pelts to tan outside.

<sup>1</sup> From *Inukaknailak and Other Stories*, produced by Kitikmeot Heritage Society and published by Nunavut Arctic College

The leader of his tribe had noticed this success and envied the young boy's catch. He asked Nukatpiak, "How is it that you have suddenly become such a good hunter?" Nukatpiak replied by telling what you have already learned about in this story, "One day I decided to go on a hunt by foot, and as darkness approached I laid down on my sleeping skins to rest. The Tulugarjuaq approached me as I was falling asleep in order to feast on my eyes." The young boy then went on to tell how he managed to take away the Tulugarjuaq's knife and benefit from the good fortune that followed.

The jealous tribal leader decided he would try the same strategy. He packed his sleeping skins and set out on foot. After a long journey, he got to the hunting area and decided to settle down for the night. After he covered himself with his sleeping skins he waited while pretending to sleep. As the time passed he actually fell asleep, and this led to his eyes being eaten out by the Tulugarjuaq. The leader later died, having been blinded by the birds and his own jealous ambition. This is the tragedy that happened to the tribe's leader.

The End

# The Siksik and The Ukpik

Told by Tautunngi, Elder, Rankin Inlet, Nunavut. Recorded and Translated by Tamalik Janet McGrath<sup>1</sup>

It is the habit of the ukpiks, or snowy owls, to scan the area for food. It is not just the ukpiks, of course, that do this as all animals and birds do so too. They roam the area in search of food, just as the Inuit do. In the old days, during our nomadic life, we would cover vast areas in search of food and materials for survival. It wasn't just the Inuit of our area that once lived like that for, at one point, all the people of the north lived nomadically.

The ukpiks, somewhat like their Inuit counterparts, have the habit of hunting any available game. Like the Inuit, they must always at least attempt to catch what comes along for their mere hands do not always make for a successful hunt.

The great ukpik was looking for something to catch and eat. It was early autumn and the siksiks, or ground squirrels, were out and about collecting food for the oncoming winter. The siksiks were collecting blueberries, grasses, red berries and other small plants. When winter brought snow, they would burrow into their dens beneath it. Their hibernation would last until spring so they would be sure to store enough food to eat.

While the siksiks were out gathering food, the ukpik saw them. He looked around for their burrows and, alas, he found one. He waited for that siksik's return there at his door.

After a time, the siksik appeared. He was returning home from foraging and needed to enter his hole. What a frightful sight awaited him! The ukpik had him trapped; he would kill him and eat him. The siksik, unable to escape, told the ukpik, "What a deliciously fat, juicy siksik you've cornered. Think what a tasty feast you are about to have. How smart you are. Rejoice and celebrate. Look up in the sky and dance with all your might."

The ukpik considered how truly fortunate he was and began to celebrate. There wasn't any way that the cornered siksik could escape. The ukpik blocked the burrow's entrance and the siksik had no refuge.

<sup>1</sup> Printed with thanks to the family of Tautunngi and to Tamalik Janet McGrath

Triumphantly, the ukpik called out to his friends, “I’ve trapped this animal; he is cornered... haul a sled in, bring him home!” The siksik was so fat that the ukpik thought he’d need to enlist the help of his friends to carry his catch. Again he called out to his fellow ukpiks, “I’ve trapped this one, he’s cornered... haul in a sled, bring him home!” By this time the ukpiks were harnessing their dogs and were soon off to the catch site. They were excited to hear of their friend’s find and eagerly went to meet him.

Meanwhile, the siksik continued, “Oh what a fine meal you will eat. Think of the tender, fat meat. Celebrate and look up in the sky. Dance and bend and open your furry legs a little wider.” The siksik sang...

Fix your view on  
the middle of  
the wide sky  
Abandon all  
to dance  
Spread your legs apart  
a little wider  
Sway this way  
and that way  
and dance.

By then the ukpik was really whooping it up, with his eyes turned so much to the sky that he was leaning totally backwards. With no more thought to the fine siksik he had cornered, he kicked his legs high as he danced.

The siksik finished the last verse of his song and, with a “ti-ti-ti-ti,” he fled for the safety of his burrow, right between the dancing legs of the ukpik. The ukpik called out again to his friends, “Iijai, jai, he got away, he got away. Go back now, go back now!”

The ukpik had been unaware of the siksik’s plan to trick him. He went along with his instructions to celebrate and, oh, what a sorry bird he was now! And there were all the friends he had summoned now returning home.



# Ukkunaalak: Flying Shaman

Told by George Kuptana, Elder, Bay Chimo, Nunavut<sup>1</sup>

*When I was growing up dogs were not chained up as far as I can remember, but they started to use chains and that is what I mostly do remember. As soon as the stores came, the Inuit started to buy chains.*

*A long time ago dogs were not chained and they didn't tear up the camp or do anything; they were loose then. Some Inuit had well-trained dogs long ago.*

*I saw the ship in these pictures you are showing me a few times. It is the Natilik. I probably was just coming home from school at the time this picture was taken; it would be around 1939-40.*

*This brings back some memories for me. I can answer your question about dogs being chained up by remembering that when I was very young dogs were not chained up. What I mostly remember though is that once stores appeared, the Inuit started to use chains and during most of my life dogs were chained.*

*Long ago dogs were not chained up and they didn't tear up camps, nor do anything bad. They were simply on the loose. Some Inuit had well-trained dogs long ago. The story I will tell comes from this long ago time.*

It was known that Ukkunaalak could fly. He would fly to people and visit them during the winter and spring seasons. He could fly, and he was very smart. Inuit had said that people had seen him flying.

He would drop in between the tents, in the cleanest areas. Every time he dropped, he would then realize where he was after observing the people's tracks and where they led.

Sometimes he would be able to see where the seals closest to an iglu were. It was told that Ukkunaak liked to visit while he was flying about. His plane would not fall because he was known to be brave. I have heard about this. His plane would fly him around with him realizing where he was going.

<sup>1</sup> From *Inukkaknailak and Other Stories*, produced by Kitikmeot Heritage Society and published by Nunavut Arctic College

One time he went visiting and then he flew over a herd of muskox and as he was flying he saw the herds. When he landed where the Inuit were, he said to them, “There is a herd of muskox close by, be sure to see them.” As they began to look for them and when they reached them, the herds were a great distance away. When Ukkunaak was flying like a plane he thought the herds were close by, but really they were too far away for the Inuit to reach them easily. Because he could fly Ukkunaak thought that the muskox were close by.

When the Inuit succeeded in killing some muskox, he was given portions of meat and fat to take along with him back home to his people because in the old days young children were given pieces of meat for their amulets. As he was heading home, he took the meat. His share was a small piece of meat and fat. When he got home with the small pieces of meat and fat he had given to the Inuit, the people all got filled from it; to his people the meat was a big piece. It is customary for Inuit to share their catch; you get a share and you get full from it.

His people were filled with the meat and fat that he had brought home for them. His people were the same size as the ‘little people’. It is a custom to Inuit to share their catch.

The End.

*I will tell more stories at another time, but I can tell you a bit about Kautakak from the Ikaluktuktiak area. He was my cousin and he was also a shaman. Alikamik had made him into a shaman but he has been dead for some time now.*

*Kautakak must have been a shaman because he could make the fish go into his nets when no one was catching any fish. “Yes he could do that; he was known to be a shaman as well.” said the interpreter. Kautak used to fly according to stories that were told from this area by Ikhik.*