INTERVIEWING INUIT ELDERS

Childrearing Practices

Naqi Ekho and Uqsuralik Ottokie
Edited by Joan Briggs
INTERVIEWING INUIT ELDERS

Volume 3

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Inuit Childrearing Practices: an Introduction

As soon as you show the child pure, unconditional love, without ever raising your voice to them, without being physically abusive, they grow beautifully. If we truly love our children we will not defend them. In our hearts we defend them but we do not show it. (Uqsuralik)

Each society lives on through its children. Children have to become responsible adults, who can take care of themselves as well as their relatives. In this book Inuit childrearing practices are described by two elders from South Baffin Island, Naqi Ekho and Uqsuralik Ottokie, who showed great wisdom in their recollections of the past. Childrearing practices are rapidly changing in the modern communities of Nunavut. Day care, nursery schools and primary schools have become part and parcel of everyday life. Yet many features of traditional childrearing can still be observed. Most young Inuit women still carry their babies in the amauti, providing them with an emotional and physical comfort no stroller can provide. Many of the students who conducted the interviews were parents themselves trying to come to terms with values of Inuit childrearing and the requirements of modern society.
The interviews were conducted by Susan Enuaraq, Myna Ishulutaq, Nancy Kisa, Bernice Kootoo, Aaju Peter, Jeannie Shaimaiyuq, and Julia Saimaiyuq, second-year students in the Language and Culture Program; and first-year students, Vera Arnatsiaq, Matthew Boki, Kim Kangok and Johnny Kopak. They had just completed a course on traditional law and the second-year students in particular had quite a lot of experience in interviewing elders.

The course was facilitated by Jean Briggs, Professor Emerita at Memorial University of Newfoundland. She has studied Inuit emotional concepts, social values and play, and childrearing practices for more than a quarter-century. In her numerous publications she has shown a great appreciation for the subtlety and skill of Inuit childrearing practices. No scholar would have been better suited to facilitate the course.

The interviews cover a wide range of subjects. The book deals with pregnancy, birthing, early childhood, children’s emotions, child abuse, play, songs and stories, and many other subjects relating to bringing up children. As Naqi observed: “Inuit have a lot of knowledge about childrearing.” In this introduction I will discuss only a few topics mentioned in the book and focus on the elders’ perspectives. Their words express Inuit ideas and values most adequately. The elders were not just recollecting the past; they were relating the past to the present. They were emphasizing those values of the past that they thought most important to the present generation. Uqsuralik stated:

When I am telling you these stories about how life used to be, I am not saying that we were better than you are today. I am not saying our way of life was better than yours. In a lot of ways it was not as good. But I certainly can say we were taught to live a very good culturally strong life. This is the kind of thing that I don’t mind talking about to people concerned with social issues, or to people at justice committees. Some people come before us and instead of judging them I like to remind them that if they grew up like we did they would not be in trouble with the law. They would have good morals, good values and beliefs. Of course you say these things because you want to help them. You want to help other people live a good life. Sometimes you think that because they did not have these values and beliefs, they are in trouble. I was very happy when I was asked to come down here and talk to you. I am not saying my life was much better than yours, but I certainly want to pass on the importance of having strong family relationships and respecting rules.

The upbringing of children was not just the responsibility of the mother. The whole community was involved in it. The grandparents were very important as pointed out by Uqsuralik:
In the old days we used to spend a lot of time with our grandparents. They used to take care of grandchildren a lot in the old days. I used to spend a lot of time with my grandparents and I was very close to them. I always used to sleep with my grandmother. In the old days we grew up always sleeping with someone else. Today we don’t even sleep with our children, but in the old days we always slept with an adult. Because of that, you developed a very strong bond. When you had cold feet they would always help you warm your feet up. Grandparents were very, very helpful.

Children were taught by practice and they learnt from the elders:

It was a happy time, even though it was very difficult, hard work. But all in all, we were learning how to do things. We were never formally taught how to do things. Today we are taught knitting or sewing by being grouped together. People were teachers only when they were elders. (Uqsuralik)

The formation of a child
When a woman was pregnant everybody was aware of it. Everything she did might affect the child. Even though Naqi and Uqsuralik did not have to observe the pittailiniq, the taboos, they still had to observe many rules. Naqi related:

Pregnant ladies should always be swift. While walking you should not be slow. You should always try to be the first one out of the house. That was one of the customs we had to follow. Before we did anything we had to go out of the house quickly, otherwise when we delivered it would be a long process. Before we ate anything, we
would go out. We would try to be the first one out. We had all sorts of rules we had to respect. If a pregnant woman went to visit, she was not supposed to just poke her head in. If she did that, the baby’s head would take a long time to come out. A pregnant woman was not to procrastinate. You never left any chore for later. You had to do it immediately because it would help you out during delivery.

Ritual observances also pertained to clothing.

When you have kamiik that have laces you don’t tie them up. You always leave them undone, so the umbilical cord won’t wrap around the neck. They always ask you not to tie the laces on your kamiik. During pregnancy, you don’t deal with strings that require wrapping or tying. You don’t deal with them so the baby’s umbilical cord does not wrap around the neck. Sometimes a baby comes out blue because the umbilical cord has been around the neck. I experienced that one time where the baby had the umbilical cord around the neck. The baby couldn’t come out because the umbilical cord was wrapped around it ... For a pregnant woman, the rules were different than today’s rules. (Uqsuralik)

Not fastening the strings of the kamiik is clearly an old custom. A tradition collected by Franz Boas (1904: 483) in the Cumberland Sound area relates:

Akkolookjo and his wife Omerneeto established the laws which the Eskimo have to obey now. Omerneeto used to wear her husband’s boots. She did not fasten the upper strings properly, but allowed the boot-leg to sag down and the boot-strings to drag over the ground. One day the soul of an infant that was on the ground crept up the boot-string and up into her womb. Up to that time, children had been found in the snow. The child grew in the womb, and finally was born. It began to cry, and gradually became old enough to speak. One day it told its parents how it had crawled into Omerneeto’s womb. It continued, “There I was as in a small house. Every night when you cohabited, a dog would come in and vomit food for me to make me grow. Finally I longed to get outside; and when I got out, I wanted to speak, but all I could do was to cry. When I wanted other food than milk, I could only say ‘papa,’ and when I wanted to say ‘I am thirsty,’ I could only say ‘oo, oo.’

Thus the first child was born. A pregnant woman’s husband’s kamiik are also referred to by Naqi:
When you were pregnant, you could not have your kamiik laces too long, otherwise the umbilical cord could wrap around the baby’s neck. Even if the woman did not have laces in her kamiik, if the umbilical cord was wrapped around the neck it could even be because the laces on the husband’s kamiik were too long. If we were asked to assist in a birth we had to undo our kamiik laces. Also, when we were asked to come, we dressed quickly because we had the pregnant woman in mind and we wanted her to have a quick and easy delivery. That’s what we were told as midwives. We also undid our hair ties.

Everyone played a part in the process. According to Uqsuralik people had to be careful with a pregnant mother. Abusing her might affect the child:

We have to be very considerate and avoid putting any kind of stress on a pregnant woman because it really does affect the baby that is inside. That’s why a lot of children have problems, as the mother was given a hard time during pregnancy.

The child in the womb was thought to be aware of its surroundings. Uqsuralik observed: “Even when babies are in the womb they can feel it if the parents are unhappy with each other. A baby who has felt this in the womb is different than a child who hasn’t felt this.” Some people had prenatal recollections. Uqsuralik relates that her uncle Peter Pitseolak remembered when he was still in the womb:

He remembered coming out of his mother. He remembered this dog trying to come in. He used to watch it. He remembered this very clearly. It was his father’s penis that he was looking at. He said when
he started coming out he came through two mountains. I think they were his mother’s legs. My uncle Peter Pitseolak used to talk about that.

His recollections evoke the story of Aakulugjuu and Uumaarnittuq as related by Boas, as well as the recollections of Rose Iqallijuq collected by Bernard Saladin d’Anglure. While the child was in the womb its sex was not always decided. Even at birth the child might still decide to change its gender. These children who changed their gender were called sipiniit. Uqsuralik stated:

Sometimes a gender change happens before the baby comes out. I think this is true. The doctors say this is not true but we Inuit have a word for this. That is why when a baby is born the sanaji quickly tries to touch the penis so the baby doesn’t become a sipiniq. Sometimes we would see a little penis and sometimes it inverted into a vagina. The word for that is sipijuq. Sometimes we see little girls that can’t pee because there is something on the urethra. When you take that off, as soon as you remove it the baby can pee. Often they label that as a gender change. What happens is that what was going to be a penis inverts and becomes a vagina. That’s the belief. It is true.

Another form of gender change often occurred because of the name the child was given. If a child was named after a person of the opposite sex it might be raised as a member of the opposite sex. But this was only temporary and should not be extended indefinitely as explained by Uqsuralik:

While the child is growing up, some do take after the person they are named after. Some girls tend to be tomboys at a young age. We think they are following their name. The girl is dressed like a boy. It is only for a short period of time that they are raised like that. Some girls want to be like that even when they are older and some just want to be like that for a while. When a boy has a woman’s name they braid his hair because of the name. They are raised like this to show love to the person they were named after. That’s why they practise this. They look like girls for a while. It is only for a short time that you should do that. You should stop this when they come of age because if it is not done soon enough the boy will keep some female characteristics. They won’t think of themselves as real men.
A woman might try to influence the gender of her child. According to Uqsuralik:

There weren’t many other girls around when I was growing up. When I had my own children, a woman told me that the reason I wasn’t having any boys was because I wasn’t eating enough seaweed. Women who ate seaweed were more prone to have a boy.

This procedure was not always effective. Naqi tried it, but it didn’t work. Both the elders agreed that what the mother eats affects the child. Uqsuralik stated, “I would also swallow a seal knee cap when I was eating, so I would have a nice round baby.” And Naqi added, “If you eat caribou kidneys, you will have beautiful babies. This applies to both men and women. We have certain things we can eat if we want our children to have a particular feature.”

Inuit often delivered upright, and not lying down. They felt deliveries went faster that way. According to Uqsuralik, “It is a lot more confusing in the hospital because they don’t use Inuit midwifery practices. It seems like in a hospital you nunujuq, hesitate to proceed with the process.” The elders described the positions of the mother and the various techniques used by the midwives in detail.

Once the child was born, it was not yet complete. It had to be made by the midwife and it had to be named. Uqsuralik related:

When a baby was coming out, as soon as you knew whether it was a boy or girl, you tried to touch the genitals. You would touch the baby right there and you would become a sanaji. It is a lot of fun practising midwifery.

The sanaji made the baby. She gave it the physical and moral qualities and skills she wished for it to have. Uqsuralik remembers:
What you do is tell the baby what qualities you want it to have when it grows up, such as being a good seamstress. I have always had short hair. My arraliaq didn’t really have much hair but I would comb it so she would have long hair. We tried all kinds of ways to make them skilful. If it was a boy I would make sure he was going to be a skilful hunter.

Naqi related that in the past the angakkuq would help to shape the child:

The angakkuq used to take the baby and pretend to paddle a qajaq and pretend to harpoon. Baby boys would be placed on the lap and they used to pretend the small baby was out hunting. You had to hold their little hands, move their arms, and power the qajaq. You pretended to paddle, and you got hold of the fist and pretended to throw a harpoon. If it was a girl we didn’t do that unless she had the name of a hunter.

Uqsuaralik remembered how she prepared a child that was born on Christmas Day:

After the birth, I didn’t go home. I went straight down to the ice because that’s where the elders’ festivities were happening. When I was there, I pretended to drag an animal, I pretended to harpoon a bearded seal and I pulled it. I tipped over and fell down because I wanted the boy I helped deliver to be a good hunter. The people on the ice were thinking I was drunk. “Oh, look at that grandmother, she’s really drunk!” I guess from a distance I looked like a drunk person falling all over the place. Last summer, my angusiaq brought me a variety of meat packed into a tirilliuk, the skin of a young
bearded seal. I tried pulling it and it was heavy. That’s how you help the ones you delivered, to make sure they become very skilful hunters.

The bond between the child and the sanaji remained strong and the sanaji often received gifts from the child she had made.

Children were often named after deceased relatives. Uqsuralik related:

When a baby constantly cries, there is a saying that the baby wants to have a particular name. Once the people name the child after that person the baby stops crying. It is often a deceased relative they had forgotten about and the baby is crying because it wants that particular name.

The relative may appear in a dream to the pregnant woman and make her wish to be renamed known. Uqsuralik remembered:

One time I had a dream about my deceased sister-in-law. She said, “My sister-in-law, I want you to be my silapaq, my outer coat.” And I answered, “Yes, you can have me as your silapaq.” I had this dream during the day. When I told someone about this dream they said, “That is because she wants to be with you. She wants you as a mother. She wants her name given to a baby from you. That is why you had this dream.” When I was in labour I wasn’t thinking about possible names for my child at all. My older sister was getting ready to go out by boat. We were loading things into the boat and I told my sister I had gone into labour. We started getting ready. It came to a point where the contractions were coming so quickly that I wanted to
push. I was not even thinking about a name but I said “My sister-in-law wants to come out.” I knew right away that the child was going to have the name of my deceased sister-in-law. This child shows us that the saying about people wanting their names carried on in babies is true.

It can be an advantage if the child is already named, as the delivery may be easier. When asked whether it was true that it is much easier to deliver a baby that has already been given the name of a deceased relative, Uqsuralik answered:

I think it is true. I have given birth to two children who had been named, and it was not as painful. There was some pain but it was not as bad as during my other deliveries. My mother was helping me to deliver. The first time I gave birth to a boy, who was named after my husband’s brother, it wasn’t really painful. My mother said it was because the baby did not want to give pain to his sister-in-law that it was not a painful delivery. Our babies do want to have particular names.

Not only do babies want to have particular names; the experiences of their deceased namesakes also affect them. All that was part of the deceased namesake is encompassed within the name. The following dialogue reflects the predicament of a young mother:

If a person is named after someone who drowned might they also drown later in life?

Uqsuralik: The boy or girl who is named after a person that has drowned will not want to play by the water, by the lake or by the
They are scared. I think they have this fear because the person who drowned is making sure it is not going to happen again. Through the name this knowledge is passed on. Even when he or she is a small child, the child does not want to go by the lake or near the water. I had a brother who drowned. There is a child named after him and he never wanted to be by the water, neither by the lake nor by the ocean nor by the river. A child who is named after a person that has drowned is fearful of water.

My cousin, whom my son is named after, drowned. My son was in bed, pretending that his bed was the boat and the floor was the water.

Uqsuralik: I think this is because the child fears the water.

Should I tell my son not to pretend to do that, or should I just ignore it?

Uqsuralik: Just ignore it. He will grow out of it. You don’t have to say anything to him. He will eventually grow out of it.

Thus the fate of the deceased namesake will shape the child, but the child will outgrow this and develop its own personality and one should not worry too much about it. Generally, people are happy to see the properties of the deceased return in the children that are named after them. Sometimes the namesakes are very much like their deceased namesakes. According to Uqsuralik:

Sometimes children show exactly the same behaviour and attitudes as the one they are named after. This is called atiqsuaqtuq.

In many respects the child takes the place of the deceased person. Naqi stated:

If a person is severely depressed about a relative that is deceased and there is a child that has that relative’s name, the elder will automatically treat the young child as if it were that person. That’s why if your child is named after someone who has died it is very important to go see that person’s relative. When you take that child who is named after a deceased person to see the relative it will uplift them enormously.

Naqi stated: “We are comforted by naming a child after our relatives. Even after they are long gone we remember their words and what they used to do. Everybody remembers certain things about the person the child is named after.” The child links the present and the past. It brings the atiq, the name of the deceased relative to life again in a new being.
Raising a child
Once the child is born it is welcomed by the whole community. Uqsuralik related:

Any time there was a new-born we always used to shake hands. The whole camp did this, even children. Everyone would go shake hands with the newborn. This practice is not being followed these days.... We would be welcoming them. We used to welcome them very much in the old days, even still today.

As a child grew up it needed to be in close physical contact with its mother. Uqsuralik emphasised:

We grew up being in constant contact with our mother. We were in her amauti while she was doing daily chores. Today parents put their babies in a room, give them a bottle and leave them alone. We used to carry our babies on our backs. As soon as they would fall asleep we would start doing things. Babies were a lot calmer. Babies hardly cried because they were with us all the time and had physical contact with us. When the child and the mother have limited physical contact, then the child becomes hyperactive and difficult to deal with. It is very important to have physical contact when you are raising a child.

The baby was carried in the amauti and the close physical contact between the mother and the child facilitated toilet training. Uqsuralik stated:
We had constant communication and that’s why they were toilet-trained very quickly. Today they don’t learn as fast. In the old days, before they even reached one year of age they knew how to go to the toilet. They learned really quickly.

Physical and mental training can hardly be separated. Toilet training, breast-feeding and eating all played an important part in disciplining a child. There was no need to force the child. Uqsuralik observed:

Some children did not want to eat that much. You gave them small portions, as you knew they were not going to finish the meal anyway. They would grow out of it. They would get into the spirit again and start eating more, but you shouldn’t force them. It’s preferable to give a small child a small plate. When they don’t want to eat much, then you give them very little so there isn’t much waste. Sometimes when you try to force them it doesn’t help. If you want them to eat properly, especially your grandchildren, you should give them small portions when they don’t want to eat, so that you know they are going to finish it. Especially when they are at that age when they don’t want to eat much. When they start growing older their appetite starts coming back so you have to adjust the portions accordingly. I have lots of children myself, and lots of grandchildren. They all have different eating habits. Some eat lots, some don’t. But I don’t force them. I just give them the portion that they want. Sometimes you are happy with the portion that they want, sometimes you aren’t. But give them an appropriate portion. Don’t say, “Eat the whole thing.” They will go through a stage for a while where they don’t want to eat, and then they will go through another stage where they will eat and eat and eat.

It is important to find the right balance with discipline. According to Uqsuralik you should not put too much pressure on a child.

If you discipline them too much they will get worse. It is only when you discipline them occasionally that they listen. If you discipline the child all the time, constantly, it seems that they tune you out. If they are doing something and you know nothing bad is going to happen, you should just let them be. Don’t discipline the child. You should only discipline them at appropriate times. If you have children, don’t
discipline them all the time. Find the appropriate time to discipline them and they will start catching on. If children are disciplined all the time they start tuning things out.

She thought balanced discipline was the best way to make a child’s mind strong.

The best way to do this is through balanced discipline. Don’t let them become quick-tempered. You need to be consistent with them. If you consistently show both love and discipline, the child will grow nicely. Children will become fearful of you if they have been intimidated too much.

Naqi also warned against the dangers of intimidation.

We should not let children be intimidated so that when they grow up they won’t intimidate others. Children who are intimidated take revenge when they become adults. To prevent this cycle, you shouldn’t intimidate them.

Both Naqi and Uqsuralik emphasised that you should not defend a child too much. Naqi stated:

You shouldn’t defend your child too much. If you do, the child will become aggressive. Not only aggressive but also bossy. This happens when people defend children. It used to be said that you would regret the way they would act later on, because the child would no longer listen to you. They would think they could do anything by themselves.
When your child is crying because another child has snatched something away from him or her, the mother should not come to their defence. If the child snatches away something you should not make the child return it because the other child will start thinking that he or she is the boss.

We never tattled. We never went to our parents for comfort or for them to defend us even though somebody was doing something to us. Even though you clearly saw that a family had less than your family we were not allowed to talk about that. We were also not allowed to say, “That person did this to me.” We were not allowed to gossip.

Uqsuralik emphasised that defending a child too much could ruin its mind.

You should never defend children in their presence because they can get an attitude. They know they are going to be defended in the future. Their mentality changes and they take advantage of the situation. It can ruin the child’s disposition. They begin to tell their parents every time they think someone has done something wrong to them, knowing they are going to be defended. We have always been told not to defend children in their presence or otherwise they are going to become spoiled children. We still follow this today. We don’t defend our children in front of them. Even though you want to defend your child, you place the blame on them. You might say, “Did you start that? Maybe it was you who started the fight, maybe you started the whole commotion?” Deep inside you want to lash out at the other child but we make our child think about what is going on.

When children have been raised properly they display confidence and they show people that they are not gossips. Instead, they are very considerate and sensitive people. That’s the result of not defending a child. You can defend your children but they should never know it. Parents and other kids pick it up right away when a child is defended too much. That is the reason we do not defend openly. In our hearts we defend them, but we do not show it.

Children were disciplined in many ways. They were told not to fight. Uqsuralik stated:

It is very important that you tell your children not to fight. Once you start telling them what they should and shouldn’t do, then they start believing it. You can tell them to be good in a positive way. We as
parents are not to take our children’s side. Children will soon forget if they have been hurt. We shouldn’t take our children’s side. We are told to discipline our children positively and kindly.

Children were not encouraged to ask questions. According to Uqsuralik: “It is common knowledge that a young child should not ask questions. When a child doesn’t ask questions you are very proud of the child. We always tell our own children not to ask any questions when we go visiting.” Naqi observed: “When we were young we were told not to repeat what the adults were talking about.” She added, “Sometimes I regret not listening in. I think that’s why there is some knowledge that we are unable to carry on. We did listen here and there.”

Uqsuralik emphasized that children should learn to respect animals: “We should not teach them to fear animals. We should teach our children not to toy with or abuse or mistreat any animal. They should treat an animal with respect. Otherwise children will be paid back one day because of the things they had been doing. We tell children not to abuse animals because one day the animals might pay them back.”

Boys and girls were taught different attitudes. Uqsuralik stated:

Little girls were not to be the boss. If a little girl was trying to dominate a younger child they were told immediately not to do it. Boys were encouraged to be the leaders, the dominant ones. If the little girl was showing dominance, she was immediately told to stop it. The boys were always taught to be the dominant ones. They were not to be overly dominant, but they were to be the leaders. Men are different from us. They have to go out and fend for themselves on the land. If we trained them that we were the boss then they wouldn’t be
able to make it out on the land alone. Women are more easily angered and that was another reason they were asked not to exercise dominance except when their brothers were doing things they were not supposed to do. Then they could exercise dominance over them by telling them to be good. We did not allow our brothers to exercise their will in these cases. We weren’t allowed to exercise our dominance in anger.

Boys might play with dolls although that was somewhat ambiguous as the following little dialogue illustrates.

Uqsuralik: It was a lot of fun when boys played inuujait with us.

Naqi: Boys weren’t allowed to play with inuujait or they would go cross-eyed.

Uqsuralik: Some of the boys would try to stop others from becoming involved and tease them. They would tease them and tell them that they were going to be cross-eyed.

Boys and girls were trained for their respective tasks. From early youth onwards girls learnt how to have an easy delivery. Uqsuralik related: “When we were small children, we were told to go out quickly after waking up so we would have an easy delivery. This is true. I always used to go out quickly.” Boys prepared for their lives as hunters.

Uqsuralik related:

Boys would carry babies for their mothers. Boys would be very willing to carry babies on their backs using an amauti because if they did they would catch beluga or narwhal. This is true. My brother, Iqaluk, for example, used to carry a lot of babies on his back and now he is very successful at catching beluga. He used to carry babies in an amauti. He was a premature baby when he was born. He really liked to carry babies in an amauti because he really wanted to be successful at catching beluga and he was. This is true.

In the last chapter of the book much attention is given to stories, songs and games. Play is crucial while children are growing up.

Uqsuralik remembers:

We used to play all sorts of games. These days we don’t see them being practised anymore. We are even forgetting some of the games.
In those days our parents were not too worried about us. Sometimes we didn’t want to eat, even though we were hungry, because we didn’t want to stop playing games. We used to play for hours on end.

Children learnt how to deal with fear through play:

We used to play tuurngaq. We would pretend to have an iglu, even though there was nothing there. The person who was playing the tuurngaq would make a big circle around the others. Even though there was no iglu, he would pretend to go around the iglu saying, “Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha.” When he got to the entrance he would say, “My child is cold, let me come in.” But he wouldn’t be allowed to enter for a long time. Finally we would let him in. Someone would say, “If you want to eat, please do.” He would pretend to eat as soon as he was offered something. Then he would go out, and then we could hear him or her pretending to throw up. After throwing up he would come back and someone would ask, “Why were you throwing up?” “Because I eat human eyes,” he would say. “I eat human eyes.” He would be told, “There are a lot of eyes at the rear of the iglu.” While he was pretending to eat, we would run away because the tuurngaq would want to eat our eyes. Some of us would be slow in running so we would be caught easily. The tuurngaq would pretend to go after our eyes as soon as it caught us. There were all sorts of games. I think watching these today would be really entertaining.

Jean Briggs was probably the first scholar to perceive the importance of play in Inuit socialisation. The Dutch historian Huizinga emphasised that there was always a serious aspect to play. You can exclude play from seriousness, but not seriousness from play. In play the child learns to handle what is and what could be, and how easily one level changes into the other. The child learns to deal with both wishes and fears. Uqsuralik remembers:

Sometimes we had dolls made out of ivory, but most of the time they were wood. We used to play a lot with those dolls. Once we had a little doll dying, and we were mourning and everything was real. My doll was my adopted child. She died and we had a funeral. Afterwards we got scared. We actually got scared over a little doll, especially of the burial site, and we couldn’t even go to that area afterwards. We pretended to bury the little doll. We were so scared we couldn’t go up there anymore. We only played this once. It was silly.
Stories and songs were also thought to benefit children and had a strong significance. According to Uqsuralik:

The unikkaqtuat are beneficial to children. At one time these stories were true, but because they are so old they just became stories. They are very useful for children. There are all sorts of stories that can be told to children. Most times, children start settling down when you tell a story. Most of the stories that we heard were true and they have a definite benefit for children.

Aqausiit also played an important part in socialising children. They are an inherent part of expressing love to a child. Uqsuralik refused to sing one, saying:

My children have to be in front of me for me to do an aqausi. If they are not here I can’t do it. Sometimes when I aqaq, my children qaqqajuq, respond to the attention. Some of them get shy, some of them get really happy, some of them get really embarrassed. The aqausiq just comes out without me even thinking about it.

Singing aqausiit to children is so much a part of the adult child relationship that Uqsuralik would do it unconsciously.

“Even though I don’t do it consciously, I still aqaq my own children without even thinking about it because I have so much love for them. Aqausiit have always been part of our lives. It is a way of expressing your love”.

Archie Angnakak hard at work interpreting while Aaju and Susan listen attentively.

Introduction — Inuit Childrearing Practices
Preparing the Book
A large number of people were involved in helping to make this book a reality. Archie Angnakak interpreted tirelessly for the duration of the course. Alexina Kublu and Susan Sammons worked on the translation of the transcripts and Sally Mikijuk typed them. Roberta Roberts from Nortext was her usual supportive self.

Stephane Kolb and Papatsi Kublu-Hill did a splendid job revising the English and Inuktitut manuscripts, and Marja Korhonen and Papatsi Kublu-Hill did an excellent job proofreading them. Brenda Mowbray provided much appreciated library support.

Permission was granted by the Nunavut Planning Commission for the use of their map, which was slightly altered for use in this book.

Jarich Oosten

Footnotes

2 See also the life story of Saullu Nakasuk in *Interviewing Inuit Elders, Volume 1*, for traditional midwifery practices.
Could you tell us a bit about your family?

Naqi: I don’t remember growing up with my father. I started to remember what I used to do and what I used to think from the time I was about seven years of age. There used to be just my mother and me. A lot of the time we would be by ourselves or with my maternal uncle Pauloosie, the one who really looked like a qallunaaq. That’s what I remember. He was tall and he had a qallunaaq father. I also remember my grandmother and her sister.

Do you remember what year you were born?

Naqi: I have been told the year, but I don’t think it is correct. The only date I know for sure is that in 1957 we came down here by dog team from Qimmiqsuuq. I left my qammaq. I just went out and walked to the dog team. I walked down towards the dog team that was on the ice. I said, “I’ll come back here some day. Please don’t destroy my qammaq.” Now I wonder if I am ever going to get back! I was just going on a visit for a year. I have never seen it again, but my children have gone back. Ooleepika remembers it, but the others don’t, although these children were all born up there in Qimmiqsuuq.

Did you come here by dog team instead of going to Pangniqtuuq?

Naqi: We went from Qimmiqsuuq to Iqaluit by dog team. My son, the one who later didn’t make it back home, had his own dog team. My maternal uncles Naullaq and Nakasuk were on another dog team. Altogether there were three dog teams that came here.
Where were you born?
Naqi: I was born in Uumanarjuaq, a famous place for bowhead whale hunting.

What was your mother’s name?
Naqi: My mother’s name was Annie Arnaq, but she was called Annie.

Did you have relatives?
Naqi: I had a lot of relatives. I am sure you remember my older sister Ningiurapik Kullu. The eldest was Alla Naullaq. There was Alla Naullaq, Kullu, then me, Naqi. My older sister Arnaquasaq was adopted. My other older sister Atsainaq, Simi’s mother, was also adopted. The firstborn had been a boy, but he died. My brother Mosesie was the youngest. The older ones had the same father. My brother Mosesie and I had different fathers. My father was a qallunaq. I still picture Mosesie as being alive because he has descendants up there. They come down occasionally to visit.

Did you know your father?
Naqi: I only heard about him from my mother. He was a qallunaq who always travelled by dog team with Juanasi Aggaarjuk who used to live in Pangniqtuuq. I remember very clearly that he used to work very hard. He used to travel by dog team and write in his journals. Because he used to write in his journals about his travels people used to come to see me, but he wrote about my sister whom I am named after. She died of lung complications.

Were you forced to come to Iqaluit or did you decide to come by yourselves?
Naqi: Other people started coming here. My husband had relatives here. Uqaittuq was my husband’s cousin. Her father Quaraq was my husband’s father’s younger brother.

How many children have you had?
Naqi: I had nine children. Two of them were adopted out. Six of my children are still alive. All of them are girls. The only boys I have are the two I adopted. One of them you all know, my son Jimmy. I took him in because he had nowhere to go. I was not looking to adopt, but I said if nobody else wanted him, I would take him in. I was not helping with the birth, I was just present. There was a string ready to tie the umbilical cord. When he came out I tied his umbilical cord and cut it. Since I was wearing a dress I
placed him in it. There was an old blanket and I covered him with it and then I went out. Even though I was running hard it seemed like I was standing still in the same place. My husband and another person were looking out the door and someone shouted, “What are you holding?” but I didn’t hear them clearly. People started coming to see what I was carrying. The next day I adopted Jimmy. He was sick for awhile. I started to think that I shouldn’t have taken the baby because I thought I made him sick. It turns out he was blind and suffering from Fetal Alcohol Effects. The doctors and nurses were right when they say he was affected by this. Today he doesn’t want to have anything to do with alcohol or drugs because he knows how this affected him. I miss him now he’s on his own. He has his own children now.

Can you name your children from the oldest to the youngest?

Naqi: The eldest was a boy, Uluppit. He had a younger brother Johnny, the one that didn’t come back from hunting. These were the two boys. There was a boy that I had down here in Iqaluit who didn’t live. I was medivaced down to Montreal because I was losing too much blood and he was down there for eight months before he passed away. I never found out why the baby died. I was unconscious all the way to Montreal. Even though I was in the hospital, I had the baby alone. No one came to me for a long time since they didn’t know I was going to bleed. After I regained consciousness, I saw that I had a boy. My niece was with me when they told me he had passed away and I regretted losing him because he was a boy. I had two boys and then, Ooleepika, Annie, Mary, and Leetia. These are my daughters who are still living today. There would have been three boys so I would have had 9 children. Aola’s wife Leona, who lives in Inukjuak, was Leetia’s twin. Annie, who is named after my mother and lives in Yellowknife, also had a twin who was adopted out. Her name is Arnaq.

Did you have two sets of twins?

Naqi: Yes. I only had one person assisting me when I was in labour with my first set of twins, Annie and Arnaq, who are named after my mother.

Why didn’t you keep the twins?

Naqi: I didn’t want to keep the twins because I didn’t think I could feed them both, and if I kept them they would be deprived of food. Adopted babies were kept alive by feeding them seal broth. I knew I would have problems if I kept both twins, so my husband’s sister Mary adopted Arnaq. Even if I had only given birth to one child, it had already been decided that my husband’s sister Mary was going to adopt it. My daughter Mary is named after my sister-in-law.
Could you tell us more about your early life?

Naqi: We lived in a camp where there were no qallunaat. I’m from a place where they used to hunt bowhead. I remember the bowhead whale hunts, especially the last hunt I went on. I have seen qallunaat whale hunters. I remember the two Inuit hunters that used to be involved. I used to go out hunting with one more than the other. When I ended up with my first stepfather, he was the younger of the two who had the boat. That’s how we used to go out to different locations. His boat was very old. The boat had been used by the qallunaat bowhead whalers. A lot of the boats were given to the Inuit by the whalers. In my teenage years they were still using these boats, even though there were kumaruat [rock lice] on the boats at certain times of the year. Because the boats were so old, they started having those little red lice.

The younger of the two men, who later became my stepfather, was a very skilled craftsman. He even made his own leg. He was a very capable, intelligent man. We used to help him out as family because he was crippled. Men used little pouches to take out hunting. They used them to put ammunition and other things in. He used his little pouch to hold his rifle. He could not walk downhill. He could not climb uphill. He could only walk on flat areas. No wonder, as he was handicapped. I have said that he was a very talented man. He used to hold something in his hand to help kill the pain in his leg. He would only know if he got cold if he felt a draft. He had enormous arms. He was very strong although he couldn’t walk if he was by himself. My mother and I were not lazy to help him. Not every day but often I would help him put on his kamiik because he was my father. I didn’t want to think of him as my stepfather. I’m very conscious of it when someone uses the word stepfather. I wonder why they are using this term. I didn’t want to label him as my ataatatsaq, my stepfather, only as my ataata, my father. I always referred to him as my father for I had not known any other. My mother told me, and I remember this very clearly in Qimmiqsuuq, “Panik, they want you to have another father.” I asked “Whom?”, because there didn’t seem to be anyone else around. She replied, “Alla.” I quickly asked, “That one who is lame?” Little did I know that he was going to be a real father to me and I was going to help him out a lot. I was used to not having a father. It was not up to me who was going to be my father. I was more concerned about my mother. I ended up being amazed by this man.

He would get two sticks and would put these on the sides of his calf, over his sock. He would place the sticks on each side, and then he would get rope that was made out of bearded seal skin and really tighten it. That’s how he used to walk and keep his balance. His right side was very thin because it had no muscle. His son, my stepbrother Tomasie, was always assisting him. There are a few people that are named after him. He was never lazy. He always did what he was asked to do. He always pulled his father with a little qajaq every time there was new fresh ice. That’s how they went out hunting.
My stepfather was a very capable, talented man. I think he used to put something in the palm of his hand to kill the pain in his leg. At this time a lot of people’s nerves were affected. I think he was one of the victims. I think it was polio that was going around. But he would not just sit. He was still very determined to go on. He died in his sleep, while still leading a fully active life.

When an old person is dying, they can ask their favourite person to go get something. When an elder knows they are going to die very shortly they will tell that person to go out and do a chore because they don’t want their loved one to see them die. Even in the short time it takes to do a chore, the elder can pass away. One of the things the elders always do is not pass away in the presence of a loved one that they are very close to. That’s what happened to my stepbrother. His father asked him to go out and his father passed away. His father told him to do a chore but when he came back he was dead.

My mother did the same thing. When people were going through Qipisa she asked her son to go see his uncle, Ittuangat. But little did he know that she knew her time was up. By the time he got back my mother was dead.

My mother had said to us that after she died we could go anywhere we wanted to. She would say this to my husband. My husband listened to her words after she had died peacefully.

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### Uqsuralik Ottokie

**Could you tell us a bit about yourself?**

Uqsuralik: My name is Uqsuralik Uttuqi (Ottokie). I was born on October 25, 1924 near Kinngait and I have always lived in that area. I grew up near Kinngait and I spent all my teenage years there. Paa was my father. Ilisuusi was my mother. My father’s adoptive parents were the only grandparents I knew. I did not know my mother’s parents. I only heard about them. My father’s adoptive father was Illi and his mother was Alasuaq. I knew them very well. When they died it affected me greatly because it was such a shock to me. They were not sick at all and the next thing I knew they were dying. We were fishing nearby. I was very close to my father’s parents, but I did not know my mother’s parents. Akpaliarjuk was my mother’s father and her mother’s name was Qimiapikuluk.

**Did you have a husband?**

Uqsuralik: I had a husband a long time ago. My husband was Uttuqi.
Do you have children?

**Uqsuralik:** I have a number of children. My firstborn was a son who is deceased, but after that I kept on having daughters, except for Pinnguaqtuq who is my only son. Qupirrualuk is one of my daughters. She lives here in Iqaluit. My other daughters are Quatsiaq, Tiraq, Nee, and then Qilavvuq. We had an adopted daughter, then Elisapee, Kunuk and Annie. They are all my daughters. Two of them are deceased. My daughters have all grown up now and I have lots of grandchildren. I can’t even count them.

Did you have a younger sister?

**Uqsuralik:** No, I did not have a younger sister but I did have younger brothers. The eldest in my family was a boy. I had two brothers older than me. I also had an older sister. They are all deceased. I have two younger brothers that are deceased and two that are still living today.

So you had six brothers?

**Uqsuralik:** Yes, but only two are still living today.

Where did you grow up as a young child?

**Uqsuralik:** I grew up near Kinngait. That’s where I spent my childhood years. I never left the Kinngait area. It was the best place in the world if you grew up there. You may see other places but you still find the area where you spent your childhood days to be the best, most scenic and enjoyable place. Every time I go there it is very joyous. I always go back to our old camp to fish. When we start heading home I always think maybe this is the last time I will be visiting this place. When you come back to it, it is really joyous. The place where you spend your childhood years is the best place in the world. I have never been very far from Kinngait. In my teenage years I started living in Kinngait permanently, after I had to have a husband. There weren’t any people in Kinngait other than the fur traders. There were no other families living there. Today the Hudson’s Bay Company people are very cold and unwelcoming but in those days it was a very warm, welcoming place.

Were you forced to have a husband?

**Uqsuralik:** Yes. I had a husband that I did not want. His daughter was even older than me. I did not want to have him as a husband but that’s how things used to be. Our parents had to approve or disapprove of who we married. If they approved and you did not want that husband, you had to get married anyway. Everything about them smells bad, like tobacco, because you really don’t want to be with them. When you are made
to marry someone you don’t want they can be very scary, even their hands are scary. Even looking at them can be scary if you don’t want to marry. We did not have premarital relationships. We went straight into marriage. But that ended up being the best thing for both of us. At first I was very afraid of him. I only became separated from him when he died. By the time he died I no longer wanted to leave him anymore because I loved him, but when we first got together I wanted him to die. I did not want him. In the old days we had no choice but to accept a husband that we did not want. It turned out that we were going to become very close and it didn’t seem that I had ever been scared of him.

Every time you went somewhere by boat you were always in danger, especially in the fall. Men used to go walrus hunting and that’s very dangerous. I used to think, “I hope he tips over, I hope he falls in the water.” And when he would come back, what a disappointment! It took a woman a long time to say yes. Sometimes it would take a year or more. I would think, “Here he is coming back from this danger. Darn!” That’s what I used to go through, that’s what I used to think. But later on it was a beautiful relationship to the point that when he passed away I had a huge empty feeling. I told myself that I would never remarry. I wanted to be head of the household instead. I’ve been propositioned ever since my husband passed away. Once I grabbed a pair of scissors when a man asked me. I swore to myself I’d do something if I was asked to marry again. Of course I refused. He never found a wife and I never found a husband. He said, “Thank you for letting me understand.” He was very sincere about it, he was very understanding, even though I refused him.

Today couples are choosing each other and they don’t even require parental approval. They only consider who they want to marry. Today the women are just as aggressive as men in looking for a mate. This is where it is very different today from the old days. Now they get married and then start getting sick of each other. In the old days you didn’t want to be with a man but you grew together, and got to know each other. You got to know each other’s weaknesses. You learned how to talk to each other. In every way everything grew.

We were not allowed to gossip or to say bad things about each other. We did say, “He doesn’t like you or she doesn’t like you,” but we were not supposed to say that kind of thing. Family values were really strong. It was always emphasized that we needed to develop a strong family relationship. Most people in our camp were related to each other. It was not like communities today. Because we were related, we were encouraged to nurture very strong family relationships and that was good. You had to behave. I could not say anything bad to my husband about his relatives in case he turned against them in my defence. We were not allowed to say anything bad about each other. Because we did that we developed a very meaningful relationship and it came to a point where I valued him more than my own relatives.
When I am telling you these stories about how life used to be, I am not saying that we were better than you are today. I am not saying our way of life was better than yours. In a lot of ways it was not as good. But I certainly can say we were taught to lead a very good culturally strong life. This is the kind of thing that I don’t mind talking about to people concerned with social issues, or to people at justice committees. Some people come before us and instead of judging them I like to remind them that if they grew up like we did they would not be in trouble with the law. They would have good morals, good values and beliefs. Of course you say these things because you want to help them. You want to help other people live a good life. Sometimes you think that because they did not have these values and beliefs, they are in trouble. I was very happy when I was asked to come down here and talk to you. I am not saying my life was much better than yours, but I certainly want to pass on the importance of having strong family relationships and respecting rules. For example, when we were small children we only stayed at the entrance of the qammaq, we were not allowed to go in and visit. When adults were talking we were not allowed to listen to the elders’ words. These rules were not written but they have been passed on to us from one generation to the next. We were not formally educated, but we would watch right at our mother’s side. Our mothers would say to us, “Move over, or I might poke you with a needle.” That’s what they used to say to us. We wanted to learn. We observed. Then we tried ourselves. When we were learning how to sew mitts we practised using skins from a seal flipper or an ugiuk or mamaggaq. We used to work with those and practise on them. It was a happy time, even though it was very difficult, hard work. But all in all, we were learning how to do things. We were never formally taught how to do things. Today we are taught knitting or sewing by being grouped together. People were teachers only when they were elders.

Is a mamaggaq a moulting skin?
Uqsuralik: Yes. In the old days we had sealskin tents. They must have smelled but I don’t remember them smelling. Whether it would be windy or rainy, they did not move in the wind, they didn’t leak, and they didn’t fall down. They were excellent tents. I grew up with sealskin tents. It was only in my teenage years that we started using canvas tents.

Were these sealskin tents called itsait?
Uqsuralik: Yes. We called them itsait. You put new skin on a sealskin tent every year. We used a lot of skins. The skin on the qajaq was changed every year as well. In the old days we used to sell the skins and we also used them as clothes. We used them in various ways. It seemed that we had very little, but on the other hand, we had a very rewarding
life, even though we had very little. You can’t say, “Poor me, I had very little.” Even though we had very little, we lived a very rewarding, fulfilling life. I am not trying to say that we are different but when you think about it, in a way we are.

Did your husband have another wife before you?

Uqsuralik: Yes, he had a wife before me. I knew her. She passed away when I was still a young girl.

Did they have a prearranged marriage for you?

Uqsuralik: No. My parents did not have a prearranged marriage for me. He approached my parents and asked if he could marry me. Men used to approach the parents and ask if they could marry the daughter. He approached my parents to see if I could be his wife. A lot of families had prearranged marriages but he was the first one who asked for me. My uncles and all my relatives had to approve first. The man that asked to marry me was approved and that’s why I married him.

Did your uncles have to approve?

Uqsuralik: My maternal and paternal uncles and my grandfather had to approve before anyone took me away. If anyone disagreed then it wouldn’t happen. The whole family had to approve before I could be married to a man. In the old days, the men were really aggressive about taking a wife. You could be kicking and struggling and hitting them and they never gave up. But we were not allowed to use any pointed weapons such as needles or scissors against them. In the old days, you could run to people that you thought the prospective husband might be intimidated by, but the man still took you away. People didn’t do anything; they just watched. That’s how we got married. It was a very difficult process. You could smell odours about your husband that you never smelled before because you didn’t want to be married.

It must have been painful emotionally.

Uqsuralik: I think there would be a lot of people going to jail today for doing the things we had to put up with.

If your family approved then you had no choice but to go along?

Uqsuralik: Yes. Your family could approve even though you were unwilling. Because my husband had been married previously he gave up on me and stopped coming over. He stopped coming over because I was scared of him. Men who hadn’t been married previously took a long time before they gave up. Since I was the only girl in the family
then, my parents never over-disciplined me, but when my future husband gave up on me I was scolded by my parents. I was told that because I did not give in to the man they wanted me to marry I was going to end up having to be with many men. In addition to this scolding I was even told I was not going to be with Jesus because I would be wife to many men. Because I wanted to be with Jesus I gave in when he started coming again. I will definitely go to Jesus! I think in those days we went through a lot.
Pregnancy

Is a pregnant woman not supposed to have bad thoughts?

Uqsuralik: Exactly. As soon as the baby is conceived inside the mother you should not let the mother worry or be stressed mentally. The mother should not be abused because everything the mother is feeling the baby also feels and hears. This is what I have been told. I witnessed one child that was born to a mother who was going through a really hard time with her husband during her pregnancy. When she had the baby, it was not warm at all. It was stillborn. The arms were half developed and it had six fingers and six toes. The feet were at knee level. We could tell it was a girl. The face was heart shaped. The brain was outside the skull. We followed the traditional practices, but I don’t remember cutting the cord. This happened because the husband was very abusive. That’s why we have to be very considerate, and treat a pregnant woman very delicately.

We have to be very considerate and avoid putting any kind of stress on a pregnant woman because it really does affect the baby that is inside. That’s why a lot of children have problems, as the mother was given a hard time during pregnancy. We were told not to get too tired when we were pregnant. We were never allowed to get tired. During our first pregnancy we never used to get tired because we were not aware of the fact that we were pregnant. We were never involved in deliveries. Mothers always used to tell their daughters to let them know as soon as they thought they were pregnant. One of the obvious ways to tell was through the face.

We were also advised to massage our stomachs so the baby could move around inside. When we move the baby around in the womb it doesn’t stick to the uterus, so the baby is free. We used to massage our stomachs during our pregnancies. As soon as you started feeling the baby moving by itself, you stopped massaging your stomach. The attitude towards pregnancy is different today. Back in those days we were very shy. As soon as the baby started moving around we would try to disguise it by moving around too. We could see our stomach moving and we would try to hide it. That’s how shy we were about our pregnancy. But today women show it off. They say, “Look at this, look how big it is.” This is so different from the way it used to be.

When we were small children, we were told to go out quickly after waking up so we would have an easy delivery. This is true. I always used to go out quickly. We were never allowed to just sit around, or to sit at the doorway. We were told if we stayed at the doorway the baby’s head would get stuck. At the hospital, labour takes a lot longer than the way we delivered. If we were handling it, the delivery would be over more
quickly. Today we seem to be very cautious about pregnancy, but in those days we never thought it was scary. You had nothing to worry about. Maybe there were a lot of potential complications, but we never thought about them. I think this was because we were always on the move.

We were told not to sleep in. We never used to say, “I'll do it later.” Whenever a thing needed to be done, we would do it right away. We never used to have babysitters in those days. While the children were sleeping, we would always do something else, such as sew something quickly. When I started having my own children, while they were sleeping I would wash the diapers and do chores very quickly. We were always on the move. In those days we started to toilet-train children at a very young age. Even very young children knew how to use the toilet. You would toilet-train your children patiently and, of course, before you knew it they were out of diapers.

One newborn I helped deliver urinated as soon as he came out. When a baby was coming out, as soon as you knew whether it was a boy or a girl, you tried to touch the genitals. You would touch the baby right there and you would become a sanaji. It is a lot of fun practising midwifery.

When I was pregnant, women always told me to let them know as soon as I felt the baby. They would always tell me to feel my abdomen to see if I had started feeling something. I went outside to the toilet and I came back without having gone, even though I really wanted to go. I was asked, “Are you in labour? Are you feeling contractions?” I said “No, I have a stomach-ache, I haven't felt the baby yet.” I was told if I felt something to tell someone. I thought it was just a stomach-ache. Without me really feeling it, the baby started coming out. I was asked again if I was in labour. My mother was still alive at that time, and she always assisted me in everything. She was a midwife. I was shaking when she came over, even my legs became wobbly. She told me to stand up when I felt the contractions. I could feel the contractions, but I was still sitting down. Napajuq is when you are giving birth in an upright position. I was on my knees and I was holding on. I could feel the contractions. The first delivery is always the most difficult and it takes a little bit longer. The second delivery is always faster than the first one. I guess it is because your body is more used to it. The first one is very slow. That is how I was with my firstborn.

Naqi: When you were pregnant, you could not have your kamiik laces too long, otherwise the umbilical cord could wrap around the baby’s neck. Even if the woman did not have laces in her kamiik, it could be that the umbilical cord was wrapped around the neck because the laces on the husband’s kamiik were too long. If we were asked to assist in a birth we had to undo our kamiik laces. Also, when we were asked to come, we dressed quickly because we had the pregnant woman in mind and we wanted her to have a quick and easy delivery. That's what we were told as midwives. We also undid our hair ties.
Did women have short kamiik that didn’t need laces, so that the umbilical cord wouldn’t wrap around the baby’s neck?

Uqsuralik: No. That’s just the style of kamikallait, the short kamiik. Women wore them because they liked the style. Those that Naqi is wearing would be fine because they don’t have any laces. It’s the kamiik that require laces that we have rules about. When you have kamiik that have laces you don’t tie them up. You always leave them undone, so the umbilical cord won’t wrap around the neck. They always ask you not to tie the laces on your kamiik. During pregnancy, you don’t deal with strings that require wrapping or tying. You don’t deal with them so the baby’s umbilical cord does not wrap around the neck. Sometimes a baby comes out blue because the umbilical cord has been wrapped around the neck. I experienced that one time where the baby had the umbilical cord around the neck. The baby couldn’t come out because the umbilical cord was wrapped around it. I had to make a quick decision to cut the umbilical cord before the baby was totally out. That’s why when a pregnant woman was dealing with any kind of string, you would never tie anything. You would always have someone else do it. For a pregnant woman, the rules were different than today’s rules.

We were asked not to chew gum because the baby would be covered with a white coating. This would make it very difficult to push and it would slow down the delivery. The baby would be covered with a white coating that looked like gum to us so we were asked not to chew gum at all. I asked the doctor once if chewing gum would cause the baby to be covered with a white coating. The doctor told me that was irrelevant. But Inuit have their own rules about pregnancy. You are not allowed to chew gum. Otherwise the baby will be very difficult to push.

Are today’s infants so much different than in the old days?

Naqi: Pregnant ladies should not sit down for long periods of time. If they did the baby would have a short neck when it was born. We used to say, “My brother has such a short neck, maybe there are only two vertebrae in his neck.” And my brother would answer back, “Look at you, you have lots of vertebrae in your neck.” My mother used to say that she used to sit too much when she was pregnant with him and that was why he had a short stubby neck. Now he teases others about having long necks. Pregnant ladies should always be swift. While walking you should not be slow. You should always try to be the first one out of the house. That was one of the customs we had to follow. Before we did anything we had to go out of the house quickly, otherwise when we delivered it would be a long process. Before we ate anything, we would go out. We had all sorts of rules we had to follow. If a pregnant woman went to visit, she was not supposed to just
poke her head in. If she did that, the baby’s head would take a long time to come out. A pregnant woman was not to procrastinate. You never left any chore for later. You had to do it immediately because it would help you out during delivery.

**Is it true that a woman who wanted a daughter had to carry around a wick trimmer?**

**Naqi and Uqsuralik:** We have not heard of that.

**Uqsuralik:** There weren’t many other girls around when I was growing up. When I had my own children, a woman told me that the reason I wasn’t having any boys was because I wasn’t eating enough seaweed. Women who ate seaweed were more prone to have a boy.

**Naqi:** I tried that, but it didn’t work.

**Uqsuralik:** It doesn’t seem to work. I would also swallow a seal knee cap when I was eating, so I would have a nice round baby. I think that one works.

**Naqi:** If you eat caribou kidneys, you will have beautiful babies. This applies to both men and women. There are certain things we can eat if we want our children to have a particular feature.

**Were you ever told if you licked your elbow you would have a boy?**

**Uqsuralik:** No. I have never been told that. Of course we have different beliefs from region to region.

**Naqi:** We always know if it is a boy because the pregnant woman’s stomach is narrow. If it is round, it is a girl. You can really tell. It is easier to deliver a boy than a girl because the contractions are stronger.

**Uqsuralik:** Being in labour with a boy is less painful than with a girl.

**Naqi:** The way you are in your first delivery is the way you will be in your later deliveries. I never had to have my water broken. I was told not to have it broken.

**Uqsuralik:** I was also told not to have my water broken, but I had my water broken once. Those who have their water broken by a midwife become accustomed to having their water broken. As soon as the water breaks the baby follows shortly after.

**Naqi:** Some women have thicker sacs than others.
Today labour is sometimes induced, especially if a woman is overdue. Did you ever know of women that were overdue?

Uqsuralik: Yes, I used to hear about them. As soon as we suspected the mother was overdue she was asked to walk around a lot. She would be told to walk around and not to sit down. That was to activate the labour. Of course when she was walking around and doing chores, then labour started. We were aware of this. A pregnant woman was not allowed to sit around. She had to be very active to induce the labour. Today doctors induce labour as soon as the woman is overdue. In the old days, as soon as a pregnant woman started physical work, or walked hard, it would start the labour.

Have you ever heard of someone remembering being inside his mother’s womb?

Naqi: Yes. I’ve only heard about it, but I believe it is true.

Uqsuralik: It is true.

Have you heard about someone remembering being born?

Naqi: Yes, I’ve heard about it from my grandmother and her sister.

You mentioned that some people have memories of being in the womb. How would that affect a child that was adopted out? Would that child not want to be adopted out?

Naqi: We don’t know if the mother had a strong feeling for the baby. We don’t know what is going through the mother’s mind when she says she wants to put the baby up for adoption. Whenever we take a child we remember our relatives who have passed away. It’s still like that today. People will sometimes tell couples of childbearing age that they would like the baby named after them. The baby can remind us of our relatives. The relatives’ traits and behaviours start coming out in the baby. These children help us remember the person they were named after. We are comforted by naming a child after our relatives. Even after they are long gone we remember their words and what they used to do. Everybody remembers certain things about the person the child is named after.

Have you ever heard of someone remembering being inside his mother’s womb?

Uqsuralik: Yes, I have heard about a person who remembered this. Some babies that are born start remembering right away. I was told a story about a woman who remembered
being born. She was not from Kinngait. She was a twin. They were brother and sister. She remembers the brother came out second, and she came out first. She could see this blue thing. She remembers the blue thing starting to grow and grow and it became a little human figure. She remembers that they could talk to each other. She would also talk to Jesus and converse with Jesus. She could see this baby being developed at her neck. She recalls it being very crowded inside her mother’s womb. They always talked to each other and they always knew what was happening with their mother. They would talk to each other and say, “One of us has to get out of here because it is too crowded.” But they couldn’t see any way to go out. They would almost struggle to breathe and they were getting tired. All of a sudden there was this hole. She saw this little hole and of course because it was crowded she started to go out. When she went out it was very cold and very bright. As soon as she went out of the mother she couldn’t talk anymore. She was thinking, please take my brother out before he drowns, before he dies and stops breathing. I guess this is true because she clearly remembers going through all of this. The husband came back into camp while the mother was in labour. We always clean babies as soon as they come out. The second one started coming out and then went back in after the first one had come out. The husband got the water ready, but the second one didn’t come out for a whole week after the first one. The second baby that came out is still alive today. There is a saying that babies in the womb do remember. All of us are aware of what is happening from the time of conception. I think that’s why women have to follow certain rules when they conceive. There were certain rules that we had to follow. I guess this was because the baby knows exactly what was happening. It is only the very few that do remember. Most of us forget. My uncle Peter Pitseolak clearly remembers from the time of his conception. This is not only a story. I heard it directly from the person who had this experience.

**What did Peter Pitseolak say?**

**Uqsurlik:** He remembered coming out of his mother. He remembered this dog trying to come in. He used to watch it. He remembered this very clearly. It was his father’s penis that he was looking at. He said when he started coming out he came through two mountains. I think they were his mother’s legs. My uncle Peter Pitseolak used to talk about that.
How did you learn about birthing practices?

Naqi: We used to be shown how to perform midwifery. We need to pass on that knowledge. People could not just go into the tent or iglu where the mother was giving birth. They could not just look in and enquire about the birth. You had to either stay in or stay out.

If you were the midwife, what did you do for the baby that you helped deliver?

Uqsuralik: Arnaliaq is what a midwife calls a little girl she has delivered. What you do is tell the baby what qualities you want it to have when it grows up, such as being a good seamstress. I have always had short hair. My arnaliaq didn’t really have much hair but I would comb it so she would have long hair. We tried all kinds of ways to make them skilful. If it was a boy I would make sure he was going to be a skilful hunter. A boy’s first catch is always given to the sanaji, the midwife. That’s how it is back home. If you were a boy that I delivered, you would call me your arnaquti. First catches should be given to the midwife. Pijaqsaijuq is the word for giving boys the skills to be a good hunter. There used to be ties to hold up women’s pants called unngiqtaq. We would have the boy undo the tie of the pants so the boy would become a really good hunter. This was done after his first catch. Even though the boy would be shy to untie the pants, he would go ahead and do it because he wanted to be a skilful hunter when he grew up. This is true. That’s how we made boys into very skilful hunters. There were many different ways to make your children good at whatever they did. You could even request to have a long or short kakkiviaq, the area between the nose and the lip.

Once as the sanaji, I said, “I want this one to help the missionaries.” I did that with one child, because it was a boy born on Christmas Day. He was born in the morning. I was on oxygen, because I have asthma, but I went over to the hospital that morning because someone was in labour. I was not too happy because I was having a hard time breathing. Then I realized it was Christmas Day. I started smiling to myself walking down to the hospital and my shortness of breath went away. I thought, “I am going to get an angusiaq on Christmas Day.” I said this even though I didn’t know at the time whether it was going to be a boy or a girl. Jesus was born on that same day. After the birth, I didn’t go home. I went straight down to the ice because that’s where the elders’ festivities were happening. When I was there, I pretended to drag an animal, I pretended to harpoon a bearded seal and I pulled it. I tipped over and fell down because...
I wanted the boy I helped deliver to be a good hunter. The people on the ice were thinking I was drunk. “Oh, look at that grandmother, she’s really drunk!” I guess from a distance I looked like a drunk person falling all over the place. Last summer, my angusiaq brought me a variety of meat packed into a tirilliuk, the skin of a young bearded seal. I tried pulling it and it was heavy. That’s how you help the ones you delivered, to make sure they become very skillful hunters.

Can you alter the faces of newborn children?

Uqsuralik: Oh yes. You could make the child have good ears or have a small or large kakkiviaq by pulling on it. If you wanted a dimple in the chin you could press on it.

Could you even do this with cheeks?

Uqsuralik: Yes. I was always happier to deliver boys. If it was a little girl, I wanted them to have long hair because I have always had short hair. I would pretend to comb down the back. I loved to go fishing, but I would forget to make these girls into really good fishers. I think one arnaliq of mine who is still small, is going to enjoy fishing. If you wanted a person to be a really good human being, you would say all sorts of things to the newborn with sincerity, and with sincerity they would become very skilled in whatever you wanted them to be skilled in. Today we don’t really help out in deliveries anymore because pregnant women always go away. Occasionally there is still a delivery in our own community. It’s lots of fun. Sometimes I go to the hospital here in Iqaluit. I have helped deliver a lot of children. Once, even though I had taken sleeping pills I still managed to help deliver a boy. When the mother is about to give birth it is very enjoyable.

Can you tell us what you have to do with the umbilical cord while it is pulsating?

Naqi: We tied it and immediately cut it as soon as the baby was born. There would be a braided sinew ready for you to use. That’s what we used to tie the umbilical cord. But I have read that in Panniqtuq you waited for the umbilical cord to stop pulsating before you tied the cord. In the old days people followed what they had been taught, what was passed on to them. In a book that I read, it said to cut the cord a certain length so you had enough to pull out the placenta. We were curious and we wanted to learn what the qallunaat did. When you tied the umbilical cord sometimes the blood was too close to the surface. We used to check to make sure the umbilical cord was being tied properly. If the umbilical cord was wrapped around the neck and was pulling on the baby inside the womb, you had to use blubber from a full-grown seal and rub it on the baby.
would use blubber from an adult male seal because it has more tissue. I was told this by my mother. I did that to my older sister, with the baby that would have been Juta Adla’s older brother.

I would whisper and ask others to get things ready when the woman went into labour. Her stomach would really harden, and she would just lie on her back. We would ask her if she wanted to deliver on the bed or on the floor. There was a caribou skin placed underneath the woman who was in labour. A piece of wood was used to keep the feet together. She was told to hang on to her hair and grab it tightly when she was ready to deliver. She would be leaning on her side or lying on her back. I delivered my own children leaning on my side.

It is very true that if someone asks you to do something while you are pregnant you should do it right away. If you were slow doing chores, you would have a slow labour. People would start saying, “Is she still in labour?” Some women who were going to assist at the birth would wait before coming over. The woman would be there, either leaning on her left side, or in a sitting up position with her legs bent. If the woman was sitting upright she would be using her posture to the best advantage for delivery. Then they would place a piece of wood behind her to keep her in a proper position.

Did your backbone have to be in perfect alignment during delivery?

**Naqi:** Yes. Your backbone had to be perfectly aligned during delivery. There would be a person to make sure the woman maintained proper posture. They would place a piece of wood there to make sure she maintained her posture during delivery. Some of the women used to check and see if the baby was at the cervix. Sometimes they would actually scratch the baby’s head when they checked. If the head of the baby was there before the water broke then the labour took longer. If the woman didn’t cooperate then the labour would take longer. We had to help each other make sure that the woman in labour maintained a proper position. Some of these women had to be very strong to hold them in the proper position.

Sometimes other people would come and help. You wouldn’t notice who they were. They would not hesitate to give the pregnant woman instructions on how to deliver. A lot of this advice was good. The first one to touch the baby would be the sanaji. There were certain things she would do. The sanaji would bestow qualities to make sure that if it was a boy he would be an excellent hunter, and if it was a little girl, an excellent seamstress. These things were said to make sure that the child was going to be very capable. In Panniqtuuq, Geela Sauulluapik’s daughter, Kullu’s granddaughter, is my arnaliaq. I used to be swift in my younger days and I told her to be like that too. Sometimes babies do follow their sanaji. When I was up there, I was told my arnaliaq won a contest. My arnaliaq had a comb in her pocket that she won and she gave it to me, and I still have it. They told me that she is working at the airport now. It is true that some
of the things that the sanajj says right after delivery do come true. Some people say that they will be remembered even after they are no longer around, because their arnaliat will continue to do the things that were said to them after they were born.

We showed women exactly how to position themselves during delivery. We used to position their feet and told them not to move their feet whether they were lying down or sitting up. Don’t move the feet, always keep them together. We would put a rolled towel or blanket between the knees so the woman would not close her legs. When contractions came the woman would lean to the left side a bit. Someone would put pressure on the right side of the abdomen and it would really help during the delivery process. I used to have my births almost half sitting up and kind of leaning backwards, not lying on my back.

In a delivery in the hospital, they are always measuring how much the cervix is dilating, from the smallest right up to ten. When it reaches seven you know the baby is going to be coming out very soon. That’s how we deliver these days. We Inuit were always constantly monitoring the uterus. You felt the stomach to find out where the baby was, and if the baby was not coming out fast enough, they used to ask for experienced midwives to come and assist. My mother was frequently asked to assist in deliveries. She was a midwife. When they knew that the baby was stuck, she would have the woman lie down for a bit and she would move the baby around.

There was a baby who had a scratch on its head because the midwife was trying to position the baby by moving it around. You had to be very careful that the mother was not leaning back too much. If the woman was flat on her back you had to make sure that the backbone was perfectly aligned during the delivery process. Sometimes the doctors don’t agree with this practice but this is knowledge that has been passed on to us. But then again we cannot challenge the doctors. I have often been told that I could take over the delivery as long as we had a doctor nearby. When I am involved in midwifery I have always been very strict about being in control of everything. I often assisted in deliveries. I was often asked to go to the hospital to practice midwifery. I have seen the doctor perform an episiotomy three times. If it rips naturally it is very hard for the medical doctors to stitch it up and I think that’s why they always cut the vagina during the delivery. Then they stitch it up. When we are sewing we tie thread in a knot. The doctors don’t do it that way. They do it differently so the stitches don’t come apart and will heal perfectly.

Can you talk more about when the placenta is unable to come out?

Uqsuralik: When the placenta is still inside the mother, sometimes it comes out by itself if the mother pushes a bit or if she sneezes. If the placenta does not come out when she is pushing, sometimes you have to wait for a while for the uterus to relax before it comes out. Sometimes the placenta does not come out right away. Each woman is different.
Some placentas are thick, some are thin, some are big, and some are small. When it does come out you have to check to make sure it all comes out. If there is a piece missing you have to check inside to make sure it’s not stuck on the uterine wall. Some of the placenta can be left behind. The placenta turns inside out as it comes out. If a piece was left inside the uterus, then you had to knead the stomach until it came out so the mother didn’t bleed excessively. You had to make sure the mother bled but not excessively. Most times, delivery is very smooth, but again each delivery is unique. Sometimes you run into difficulties and complications with a first-born. If the woman was on her back or side for her first delivery she would prefer to deliver that way in the future. If she were upright during her first delivery then she would prefer that way. I have delivered on my back three times and it is a lot more difficult than being upright. It takes a lot longer.

If you turn a baby upside down, what happens?

Uqsuralik: You never put a baby upside down because the blood flows to the head. There are certain things you have to do with small infants, such as move the legs. When you move the leg muscles they do walk earlier. It is evident that they learn how to walk more quickly if you move the legs in a walking fashion. When you see babies touching their feet with their hands they are learning how to control their gross motor muscles.

Naqi: When they start putting their fingers in their mouths, you know they are going to start grasping soon. Even when babies are in the womb they suck on their thumbs. You can tell the baby was sucking the thumb, as sometimes you aren’t able to put the arm down because they are so used to sucking their thumbs.

Can you also talk about sipiniq? Did the baby’s gender sometimes change from one sex to the other?

Uqsuralik: Sometimes a gender change happens before the baby comes out. I think this is true. The doctors say this is not true but we Inuit have a word for this. That is why when a baby is born the sanaji quickly tries to touch the penis so the baby doesn’t become a sipiniq. Sometimes we would see a little penis and sometimes it inverted into a vagina. The word for that is sipijuq. Sometimes we see little girls that can’t pee because there is something on the urethra. When you take that off, as soon as you remove it the baby can pee. Often they label that as a gender change. What happens is that what was going to be a penis inverts and becomes a vagina. That’s the belief. It is true. We believe that as Inuit. Sometimes the baby can’t pee because of the mucus that is on the urethra. The elders say they used to place rabbit fur around the genitals to remove the mucus. As soon as you remove the mucus the baby pees. As Inuit we believe that happens to sipiniiit.
When a sipiniq is growing up, does the girl act like a tomboy?

**Uqsuralik:** That’s true. Sometimes we see these girls that act like tomboys and are just as aggressive as boys. But I have rarely heard it the other way, where a vagina grows into a penis. I have rarely heard that. It is usually a boy that turns into a girl. I have rarely heard of it happening the other way.

**Did they choose names before the baby was born?** When I was pregnant I used to think maybe I should name my baby Killaq. Did that used to happen in the old days too?

**Naqi:** Yes, a pregnant woman used to be told what to name the baby. Of course, families were very interested in keeping their relatives alive through naming. I could be told, “This person wants to be with you. That person wants to be with you.” So I would give that person’s name to the baby. Therefore, the baby could be my illulikuluk, cousin.

**Uqsuralik:** We never named our own children. It would be the midwife that named the child. When you were a mother sometimes you didn’t really like the name they chose. When I was told Qupirrualuk, which means a creepy bug, would be my daughter’s name, I thought, “Qupirrualuk, what an awful name.” But I couldn’t say that I disagreed. My daughter is here today in Iqaluit. I didn’t want her to have that name but naming was not up to us. Whatever the midwives chose as the name was what you were stuck with. Sometimes they would choose really funny names.

**Have you heard that when a baby is crying, it is because it wants to be named after a particular person?**

**Uqsuralik:** When a baby constantly cries, there is a saying that the baby wants to have a particular name. Once the people name the child after that person the baby stops crying. It is often a deceased relative they had forgotten about and the baby is crying because it wants that particular name. One time I had a dream about my deceased sister-in-law. She said, “My sister-in-law, I want you to be my silapaq, my outer coat.” And I answered, “Yes, you can have me as your silapaq.” I had this dream during the day. When I told someone about this dream they said, “That is because she wants to be with you. She wants you as a mother. She wants her name given to a baby from you. That is why you had this dream.” When I was in labour I wasn’t thinking about possible names for my child at all. My older sister was getting ready to go out by boat. We were loading things into the boat and I told my sister I had gone into labour. We started getting ready. It came to a point where the contractions were coming so quickly that I wanted to push. I was not even thinking about a name but I said “My sister-in-law wants to come out.”
I knew right away that the child was going to have the name of my deceased sister-in-law. This child shows us that the saying about people wanting their names carried on in babies is true.

Is it true that it is much easier to deliver a baby that has already been given the name of a deceased relative?

Uqsuralik: I think it is true. I have given birth to two children who had been named, and it was not as painful. There was some pain but it was not as bad as during my other deliveries. My mother was helping me to deliver. The first time I gave birth to a boy, who was named after my husband’s brother, it wasn’t really painful. My mother said it was because the baby did not want to give pain to his sister-in-law that it was not a painful delivery. Our babies do want to have particular names.

Do babies sometimes come prematurely because they want to carry on the name?

Uqsuralik: Wanting to have a name is not the only reason for that. Sometimes babies come after the due date and sometimes they come before the due date. I had an easy premature delivery. When the baby knows the mother is sick, the baby wants to come out earlier. I had a physical problem and the baby did come early. I had a premature baby. I could cover the head with my palm. That’s how small it was. I think you know Tiraaq. She always comes down here for the teacher education program. She was a premature baby. I was almost seven months pregnant when she was born. She was not that big. Sometimes it is not because the baby wants to have a particular name that it is born prematurely.

Have you ever heard of a baby being sickly because it wanted another name?

Uqsuralik: I have not heard about that. Sometimes a baby is given a name. They know they are not going to live long so they want to be given another name. Sometimes that seems to be the case. Sometimes when you find the right name for them then they lead a long life.

When a baby gets older can it still be given another name?

Uqsuralik: We rarely give babies that are healthy another name after their first year. There are adults that we know by one name that start using another name. If I don’t want to be Uqsuralik anymore I could take another name. [laughter]
Could anyone bestow a name on a baby or was it just the sanaji or arnaquit?

Uqsuralik: Anyone in a camp could ask to have the baby named after their relatives. Someone might say, “I would like the baby to carry on my father’s name.” The person who was acting as a midwife was not the only one who would decide the name of the child. Anyone in the community could put forward a name. But in the old days it was more often the midwife who would give the name. Sometimes we wouldn’t like the name especially when the midwife would say a name like Qupirraluk, which means a creepy bug. This was the name given to my daughter. It turned out that she was named after one of my husband’s deceased sisters.

You didn’t mind afterwards?

Uqsuralik: No. After a while you don’t mind the name.

If a person is named after someone who drowned might they also drown later in life?

Uqsuralik: The boy or girl who is named after a person that has drowned will not want to play by the water, by the lake or by the ocean. They are scared. I think they have this fear because the person who drowned is making sure it is not going to happen again. Through the name this knowledge is passed on. Even when he or she is a small child, the child does not want to go by the lake or near the water. I had a brother who drowned. There is a child named after him and he never wanted to be by the water, nor by the lake nor by the ocean nor by the river. A child who is named after a person that has drowned is fearful of water.

My cousin, whom my son is named after, drowned. My son was in bed, pretending that his bed was the boat and the floor was the water.

Uqsuralik: I think this is because the child fears the water.

Should I tell my son not to pretend to do that, or should I just ignore it?

Uqsuralik: Just ignore it. He will grow out of it. You don’t have to say anything to him. He will eventually grow out of it.

If there was a particular name that I wanted a child to have, would I have any obligations to this child as it was growing up?
Naming means a lot more to some people than to others. If you knew the person the child was named after, you had to treat the child exactly like the person they were named after. If the person that the child was named after was a very nice person, a very kind person, what you would have to do is make sure the child was being raised to be just like the person they were named after. Sometimes children show exactly the same behaviour and attitudes as the one they are named after. This is called atiqsuqtuq.

If some of us shared the same name what would we call each other?

Atikuluapik, sauniapik, atitsiaq are all names you could call each other.

In terms of behaviour how would we act towards one another?

Even if you don't share amongst each other it's fine.

Would you tuqturaq, use this term to address each other?

From then on, these two people would address each other as annuraaqati.

Can you talk about people who share the same name competing with each other in trying to be more like the person they were named after?

When we share the same name and we call each other atikuluk, we say things like, “I have the name more than you do. You are younger and don’t have the name as much.” Because we want to show that we want to have the name more than the other person, we try to outdo the other.

In Kinngait, we use the word atikuluk to address someone who shares the same name. In Salliq, they use the word avvaq or avvakuluk. In a way, it is describing that you are two halves of a whole.

My son is named after someone who is still alive. How should my son treat him?

He doesn’t necessarily have to do anything for him or even visit him, but he must show that he shares the same name by saying atikulluga, to show their relationship and that they share the same name.
My name is Saullu. I call those who share the same name as Saullukulluk. Is that all right?

Uqsuralik: You can do this in many ways. Jaiku who lives here in Iqaluit and I call each other Jaikuuqati.

How did they deal with a stillborn?

Naqi: When the baby was not breathing at all, iluttirniq, when there was a premature delivery, and you could see all the fingers and that everything was all there, it was treated as though it was a person and not just thrown away. You didn’t just deal with it in any old way. It was wrapped, even though it was very small and placed alongside an existing grave. They were not just thrown away. These days when a foetus which is not yet fully formed comes out, the term that is used is irnirluttuq. In those days, we used the term pirluttuq. There is more bleeding then than in an actual delivery.

Did they name these stillborn babies?

Naqi: No, I don’t think they ever named them. I used to see small mounds in former camps and I would wonder if this was where a stillborn baby was buried, as they were not placed in a coffin. In the old days every time a person died all the personal effects were buried with the person. In the old days there were no steel drums, just wooden barrels, and that’s what we used to build a coffin. I often wonder if I should go back to Uumanarjuaq and get some of the artifacts that we used. Some of the burial sites are just bones now but you can see they all have personal effects inside them. Even if the burial site was totally exposed, we were not supposed to touch the personal effects. We had to whistle first, before we could touch anything. If you whistled before you touched the personal effects at the burial site you had a much better sleep because you had respected the rules. Sometimes we used to say that people who didn’t really sleep well must have been handling the bones of deceased people. A lot of personal effects such as tools were handmade. The deceased were dressed in their best clothing. You didn’t put the thumb into the mitt and you didn’t tie the laces on the kamiik. You were to leave the personal effects at the burial site. In earlier years, they used wooden barrels as coffins.

Did they have things ready for the newborn baby?

Uqsuralik: We used to have a rabbitskin pouch ready to put the baby in after it was born.

Naqi: This pouch was already sewn. The first clothing would also already have been made and ready for the baby.
I was told not to prepare for the baby.

**Uqsuralik:** Some people do say that.

**Naqi:** If they didn’t have a rabbitskin handy, they used their **qutturauti**, a thigh warmer, by sewing up the bottom. They put the baby in a pouch because they didn’t want anything to touch the umbilical cord.

**Would you take the baby out of the pouch as soon as the belly button healed?**

**Naqi:** As soon as the belly button healed, you didn’t keep it in the pouch anymore, unless you were going to put it in the **amauti**.

**Uqsuralik:** I myself used to keep the baby in the pouch for a long time because I had a hard time putting the baby in my **amauti**. Some women are very talented in using an **amauti**. I was very awkward. In fact, I would look at myself in the mirror when I was trying to put the baby in the **amauti**. I would always ask someone else to assist me in putting the baby into the **amauti**. Every time we went out I would ask someone to help me. If I tried to do it myself I got totally disoriented. Some women are just excellent at it and are very quick at putting their babies on their backs.

**When babies were born, how did they deal with them? Did they wash them right away?**

**Uqsuralik:** The baby was never washed right away. The first thing that they did was to suck out the mucus as soon as the baby came out. Babies could have something in the mouth or the nostrils, so you sucked out the mucus-like stuff, and you wiped it right away. You sucked the nostrils with your mouth. You always took good care of a newborn. Babies always urinate as soon as they are born. It could be dangerous to the mother if they defecated when they were coming out. If they defecated outside of the mother, that was fine, but if you noticed that there was fecal matter when the baby was coming out, it could be dangerous for the mother. In the old days they never used to sew up a woman if she tore. Today they always seem to put stitches in. In the old days they never did that. In the old days we used rabbit fur to wrap the baby in. The wrap was already made and ready for the baby. Before the mother delivered, they already had this fur made for the baby. In the old days we never had fabric to wrap them in. Later on we started using fabric sewn over the rabbit skin. When the baby peed in the rabbit fur we used to dry the rabbit fur right away. In the old days the baby was rarely left wet, but now this happens with diapers. Babies were toilet-trained before they reached one year of age. You always were aware and attentive; “**Haa, had**” is what we used to say, when
we were teaching them. We had constant communication and that’s why they were toilet-trained very quickly. Today they don’t learn as fast. In the old days, before they even reached one year of age they knew how to go to the toilet. They learned really quickly.

The umbilical cord would be tied before it was cut. Sometimes there were complications during delivery, especially when the umbilical cord was wrapped around the neck. In the old days we were told to take care in wrapping the sinew we were braiding. During pregnancy we were not allowed to braid at all because the umbilical cord might wrap around the baby’s neck. The babies weren’t washed in water, they were cleaned and put on the mother’s breast right away. That didn’t happen to me because I wasn’t producing milk. I fed my baby with a bottle.

You did not breastfeed?

Uqsuralik: All my children have been bottle fed. Some women are not able to produce milk. I was one of those women.

You were mentioning that it would be dangerous to the mother if the baby had defecated while still in the womb. What was the danger?

Uqsuralik: The fecal matter would stop the bleeding. It caused the blood to clot. As soon as that bleeding stopped you started worrying. You always had to try and massage the stomach to get the blood flowing.

You were mentioning cleaning around the mouth and nostrils of the baby. What was the mouth wiped with?

Uqsuralik: The mouth was wiped with a piece of cloth right away because they didn’t want the baby to swallow mucus. A baby that swallowed mucus could take a long time fattening up. If the baby didn’t breathe right away it was taken by the feet, put upside down and slapped on the buttocks.

Sometimes there is a breech delivery and you cannot cut the umbilical cord right away. You have to wait until the baby is completely out. In a breech delivery the mother has to be positioned lower than the baby. You have to wait until the baby comes out to cut the umbilical cord. This is what we know. You have to make the blood go down to the baby’s head. A breech delivery takes much longer than a regular delivery. If you see one foot coming out you have to push it back in until you see both feet coming out. You have to push the foot back until you see both feet. What you do is push the foot in until the other foot comes out. Once in a while there will be a breech delivery. When you see both feet coming out then you can proceed with the delivery. I experienced one delivery
inside an iglu where the bleeding was excessive. I didn’t know what to do because nobody ever showed me. This woman was bleeding excessively. I was giving her lots of fluid, such as water and hot chocolate. In the old days we used to have unsweetened cocoa, that’s what I was giving her. I was giving her a lot of fluids and she recovered quite beautifully, even though she lost a lot of blood. On occasion, some women die of excessive bleeding, but most times it is a good delivery. I have never seen anyone else who had excessive bleeding after a delivery. I have only seen it once.

**Does a breech delivery take quite a bit longer?**

**Uqsuralik:** It’s a slower process. The baby always settles down completely. The head is always the most difficult part of the delivery. That’s why the labour stops once in a while. The contractions just come and go when you are lying down. It’s a much slower delivery than if you were in labour upright. In the old days labour used to be faster because you were upright. I delivered three times in a hospital and it was a lot slower than my previous deliveries. It is a lot more confusing in the hospital because they don’t use Inuit midwifery practices. It seems like in a hospital you **numujuj**, hesitate to proceed with the process. If the placenta doesn’t come out right away, you tie the umbilical cord around the mother’s leg. Sometimes the placenta gets stuck to the uterus. If it is not stuck, then it just comes out. Sometimes the placenta does come out right away. They are different sizes. Some are huge, some are medium, and some are thick and some are not. Sometimes they don’t come out right away. It depends on the woman. The delivery of the placenta is not painful like the delivery of a baby.

**What was that about tying the umbilical cord to the leg?**

**Uqsuralik:** You have to tie it to the leg so the umbilical cord won’t go back in. Some placentas take a long time to come out and that’s why you always try to move your baby and massage it all the time so that the placenta won’t be stuck to your uterus. When you tie the umbilical cord around the leg, the placenta eventually comes out. I have heard that when the placenta is stuck to the uterus you have to pull it. Even though we were not doctors we knew how to remove it. I have never witnessed this myself, but I have heard about it.

In the old days, when there were dog teams they used to deliver even when they were on the move. They would make an iglu very quickly. The woman would deliver while they were still on the move. I guess this would happen when they didn’t know exactly how many months a woman was pregnant. They would be on a dogteam and all of a sudden the contractions would start and they had to set up an iglu. They were very knowledgeable, very capable people.
Are there times when the uterus is too loose?

Uqsuralik: Your stomach becomes round right after delivery. Sometimes it is painful. Even though it is like that we shouldn’t be scared. Even though it can hurt a bit, it heals itself.

Do you have to massage your stomach after delivery?

Uqsuralik: No, you don’t. You only have to massage the abdomen if a woman is not bleeding properly. It is only after a certain amount of bleeding that the uterus becomes relaxed.

Are newborn girls dealt with differently than newborn boys?

Uqsuralik: They are treated the same way. If it is a boy you touch the genitals and you become the sanaji. All the women tried to be the first to do this, especially when it was a boy. It is a lot of fun trying to be the first one. We who helped deliver enjoyed the whole experience. It is a beautiful experience. Of course it can be a scary process, but you can’t show it, even though it’s very painful. It is a pain that is unlike any other. When you see the baby that just came out of you, all that pain evaporates and you feel immense love for this newborn. That’s how it happens.

Did they shake hands with a newborn?

Uqsuralik: Yes. Any time there was a newborn we always used to shake hands. The whole camp did this, even children. Everyone would go shake hands with the newborn. This practice is not being followed these days.

Would you do this to welcome the child?

Uqsuralik: Yes. We would be welcoming them. We used to welcome them very much in the old days, even still today. I think in the old days that the newborn was more welcomed because there weren’t as many births.

In the old days, even though there were extended families they didn’t conceive as frequently as today, did they?

Uqsuralik: Pregnancies were further apart than they are now, probably because women were breastfeeding. But because I didn’t breastfeed, I myself used to have one almost every year. Sometimes one child would catch up to an older one that was just learning how to walk. It was very tiring, but we kept on going. They are very lovable and that is what makes you strive to keep going.

Childrearing Practices
At around four years of age children become hyperactive. Why do they become this way?

Uqsuralik: Inuit know about this. You shouldn’t look for the little piece of the umbilical cord on the stomach of the baby when it comes off. If you find it the child is going to be very hyperactive. You shouldn’t search for it when it comes off. There is an uqusiaq, a saying, about this. Probably it is true.

When children have parents who are different from each other, do they become hyperactive?

Uqsuralik: Yes. The child is more hyperactive if one of the parents is a qallunaq and one is an Inuk. These children are more hyperactive than a purely Inuit or a purely qallunaq child. They are very hyper. Children from mixed marriages are hyperactive. Some of my grandchildren are like that. They are from mixed marriages. You can really see they are more hyperactive. They go everywhere, are mischievous, and climb on top of things.

How do you discipline a child so they know not to get up on things?

Uqsuralik: By disciplining them verbally. Even though you discipline them, it takes time. You have to keep it up, especially for children from mixed marriages. All my grandchildren want to be with me. You love them a bit more than the mother. When they are your grandchildren you love them even more than your own children. You can see that they are a lot more hyperactive than your own children. They grab needles and are into everything. My own children never did that. The mother disciplines them and as the grandmother you defend them. Grandchildren are a lot more loveable than your own children.

Are children from mixed marriages different? Do they learn faster?

Uqsuralik: I don’t think so. My grandchildren from mixed marriages are not quicker learners. They are all at the same level. I think it is individual as to whether they are quick learners or they are average. I have an older grandchild still learning how to write. I have two other grandchildren that learn quite a bit faster but of course they don’t know their letters. Their father had the same problem and my husband didn’t know how to
write either. Maybe they take after their grandfather and their father. They can write but they have a hard time learning. Even though they are part qallunaat they are slower than my Inuit grandchildren.

Is it true that if you overdiscipline children they can get worse?

**Uqsuralik:** Yes. If you discipline them too much they will get worse. It is only when you discipline them occasionally that they listen. If you discipline the child all the time, constantly, it seems that they tune you out. If they are doing something and you know nothing bad is going to happen, you should just let them be. Don’t discipline the child. You should only discipline them at appropriate times. If you have children, don’t discipline them all the time. Find the appropriate time to discipline them and they will start catching on. If children are disciplined all the time they start tuning things out. 

What should we do when they are answering back?

**How should we treat them?**

**Uqsuralik:** Some children are very difficult. Some are very easy to deal with. A child that is always answering back displays that behaviour because at a young age they have been defended. They have been spoiled. Being defended makes them feel that they never do anything wrong, and when they become teenagers they answer back. Some of them do not hesitate to answer back. It is better not to deal with it. Just leave it be when they are answering back. Eventually they will give up and start realizing that answering back will not get them anywhere. Just leave it alone. When they calm down and you see that they are happy then that’s the time to talk to them about what they did. It’s inappropriate to try and talk to them when they are angry or when they are mad. The best time to talk to them is when they have calmed down.

Children that have rarely received love at a young age can be more difficult to handle. Children who grow up with abusive parents display the same behaviour when they become adults because they always heard hurtful things during their childhood.

Sometimes children act up, especially when we have visitors.

**How do we deal with this kind of situation?**

**Uqsuralik:** Some children do act up, especially when there are visitors. They feel they can get away with more. They are not afraid to become hyperactive. When children realize they aren’t getting any attention, they become hyperactive so they can be heard. They start misbehaving and start taking things they are not supposed to take when they have been overdisciplined. The children are thinking, this is a perfect time to do something without being disciplined. How you should deal with the situation is to not
constantly discipline the child. If the child clearly knows that he is loved, he will listen to you because he hears that he is a nice person and that he is a very good child. When you discipline them occasionally, they are more sensitive to discipline and they want to be good if you have been treating them well. Children are all like that. You have to balance discipline and love when raising them.

Some children pout easily. How can we get them to stop doing that?

Naqi: They grow out of it by themselves. They have very childlike minds when they are growing up. If the mother or father tend to be like that the children imitate the parents. In the same way that their bodies are growing so are their minds. When they finally grow out of it, you can’t believe it used to be the same child.

Do favoured children have a shorter life span?

Naqi: It is well known that favoured children have a shorter life span.

Were parents told to teach their children not to tattle-tale?

Naqi: We never tattled. We never went to our parents for comfort or for them to defend us even though somebody was doing something to us. Even though you clearly saw that a family had less than your family we were not allowed to talk about that. We were also not allowed to say, “That person did this to me.” We were not allowed to gossip. You couldn’t even trust some people because you knew they were going to tattle. When you would go and visit some people, the parents would say, “Why did you treat my children like this?” Surjak is the word to describe that type of action.

How do we deal with tattle-tales? When they say this boy or this girl hurt them, should we just ignore it?

Uqsuralik: Some kids always say, “I’m going to tell on you!” We simply tell them, “If you tattle your tongue is going to be cut off,” or “If you tattle too much your mouth will be sewn together.” That’s a way to deter tattle-tales. This works. They stop tattling. That’s one of the ways to deal with it.

I have two children. One of them tattles easily. Sometimes I just ignore it. Am I doing the right thing?

Uqsuralik: You are not doing the wrong thing. It’s okay to ignore them. Just tell them, “Don’t tattle or your mouth is going to be sewn shut.” Of course we are all different. We shouldn’t listen to children when they are tattling, especially when we know what to
ignore. When you have more children it’s different. They listen to others outside the family. We should tell them that what they heard may not be true. You condition them to think there is a possibility it might not be true. Sometimes it’s okay to ignore them.

**What should we do when our child is saying bad things about other children?**

**Uqsuralik:** You have to be very honest with them. Tell them that if they treat that child with kindness, they will be treated with kindness back. It is quite difficult, especially when you love your child, to display this kind of parenting. I think for my generation, because we were in a camp, it was a lot stricter. There were not many children to play with in those days. In those days we joked a lot less because there were fewer children. There were times when we got into mischief, but it was not like it is today. In those days we used to spend a lot of time outside. Myself, I used to be defended. I used to lie on the floor and have temper tantrums and I used to get my way. When my older sister was still alive I used to want to be with her. We were very close to each other. When I didn’t get my way, I used to lie on the floor on my back and start crying. I used to be like that myself. When an older sibling doesn’t want a younger sibling to follow, then the younger sibling shouldn’t follow. You should respect when the older sibling doesn’t want the younger sibling to tag along, because they need their own space. They need their own time. When we talk about the old days we always say we were better. We were not to talk about bad things. In those days we held a lot of things back because they were not worth talking about. Although we weren’t any better than we are today, it seemed that we were better in our younger days because we lived in smaller camps.

**How do children become liars?**

**Uqsuralik:** Some children become liars because their relatives always believe them. That is when children start learning how to lie. When a child says, “That child was picking on me,” and the mother believes them then they start getting used to this. That’s how it begins. The child believes that he or she can get away with anything. Eventually they start becoming chronic liars. As soon as you are honest with them about not telling the truth and confront them, then they start learning.

**Were children asked not to grab the scraper because they might become liars?**

**Uqsuralik:** I have never heard of that, but of course we are not all the same.

**How do we teach children not to be stingy?**
Uqsuralik: They should not be stingy about anything especially food. We are told not to be stingy, even with the smallest piece of food. Don’t keep it to yourself. If you are generous it comes back, and it will be a bigger amount. If you do that, other people ask you to come over to eat. If you keep inviting people over, food will always come to you. But when you are stingy about food, food disappears really quickly. If you are generous with everything, food will always be abundant and come quickly. The food will be replaced immediately when you are not stingy. Of course people are thankful to you for sharing. When you are stingy about food it is very obvious. We know how people are feeling through looking at their eyes. It is very obvious from looking at their faces when they are stingy and are displeased with you for taking food. Qumiutigali una means I am saving this for someone. Food shouldn’t be kept for one person or one family. It should be distributed and shared because it will be replaced right away.

How do you deal with children who fight other children who play with them?

Uqsuralik: When a child likes to fight, other children don’t like him or her and they start thinking that it’s not worth being friends. Children that always fight are the least likely to have a lot of friends. But if children are always really nice, they become very popular and the word gets around to other children. When you start noticing your own children fighting, tell them not to do it. Of course we don’t want our children to be the fighting type. If you don’t do anything then they keep it up. It becomes their way of being the dominant one. It is very important that you tell your children not to fight. Once you start telling them what they should and shouldn’t do, then they start believing it. You can tell them to be good in a positive way. We as parents are not to take our children’s side. Children will soon forget if they have been hurt. We shouldn’t take our children’s sides. We are told to discipline our children positively and kindly.

Were boys told not to scratch others?

Uqsuralik: In the old days we would tell them not to scratch others because an ugiuk, a bearded seal, or a bear would scratch them one day. We were taught that. If a child scratched another child, an animal would pay them back one day by scratching them.

How about little girls?

Uqsuralik: Little girls were much more pleasant and much more sociable with each other, so scratching was rarely seen.
When a child doesn’t want to go to a particular friend’s, should we ask why they don’t want to go anymore?

Uqsuralik: You can ask them, “Why are you no longer going to your friend’s house?” They can answer, “They are no longer good to me.” You can answer back to them, “Even though they were bad to you, you shouldn’t feel bad, you shouldn’t think about getting back at them. Just be friends with them.” There are times when they will be angry for a while and then they’ll get over it.

What if they don’t want to go with me to that house?

Uqsuralik: If the child really doesn’t want to go, then you shouldn’t force them. A day will come when they will have gotten over it. That’s the time to bring them.

Sometimes children steal things. What should we do about that?

Uqsuralik: If we are quite strict about telling them not to steal, they stop it. When there were only Inuit we used a lot of deterrents while raising children. Once my friend got caught smoking. She got tied up to a rock to teach her a lesson. She wasn’t even stealing. She was just smoking. In the old days there were lots of deterrents to ensure good behaviour. This was done to make her think, to make her realize that what she did was wrong. In the old days it was very strict. We never did things behind our parents’ backs. We were told not to do things behind people’s backs. I also learned a lesson when my friend got tied up. I was a really good friend of hers and was really feeling for her and defending her.

If I had something stolen and I recognized it, could I ask for it back?

Uqsuralik: Of course you could ask for it back if it were yours.

I have read in the Bible that if something was taken from me I shouldn’t ask for it back.

Uqsuralik: I really believe this. Sometimes you might just have lost something and someone might have found the item. If you know it was stolen, then it is still yours.

If you notice something is missing, you shouldn’t look for it?

Uqsuralik: If you are sure that it was stolen, then it is fine to say, “That is mine.” As long as you do this immediately it is fine. As soon as you recognize something is yours it’s fine to ask for it back.
Naqi: When your child is crying because another child has snatched something away from him or her, the mother should not come to their defence. If the child snatches away something you should not make the child return it because the other child will start thinking that he or she is the boss. When our children were young they didn’t have many store-bought toys. We made toys such as dolls. We used to make dogteam sets for our children. During the summer during boating season, our daughters would put their dolls in a basin and pretend to go boating. We imitated what our parents did in real life. Today, everything is just there for the taking, for instance, ready-made clothing. Our clothes in those days lasted much longer. Now fabric wears out easily. The fabric in those days was of a good enough quality to put beadwork on. We bought this fabric from a trading post south of Pangnirtung. I’ve seen that place. My ittuq who had two names, Kanaaq and Nakasulaaq, before there were surnames, used to run it.

If children are always teasing, how should we deal with them?

Uqsuralik: If you reprimand a child that is always teasing and they just cry or start laughing, you know they are going to be very difficult to deal with. If the child listens, then you know the child is not going to be difficult to deal with. It is very difficult to make some children change. I have been in the role of disciplining young offenders when we have had to deal with them with the Youth Justice Committee. You can see when it is going to be very hard to turn a difficult child around. If the child is going to be difficult to deal with you shouldn’t deal with them lightly. The first counselling would be not very strict. The second time around it is more strict, and the third time around it is very strict. They start turning around when you counsel them. Some of them listen. Some of them are hard to deal with, and some you cannot deal with at all.

When you get angry with children should you control your anger?

Uqsuralik: Yes, even though you are angry, your anger should not be excessive when you are talking to the child. We are old women now. We always talk kindly to other elders. Today we hear young people mumble to themselves when they disagree with us. We listened to what we were told and to the lessons we were taught, how to treat other people, and how to live our lives. We can’t forget that. We don’t forget that. Ever since we received this advice we have tried to live like that. Now we are elders and we try to pass on the same things. Please be kind, be considerate of other people and you will lead a long life. Please be nice, help the elders at every opportunity you get, so your life will be very rewarding. Those were the words that we heard. We hung on to them and held them close to us. We used to be asked to be very caring, especially towards the disabled. We have always lived like that.
Naqi: You can’t see it, but this is the knowledge we have inside. Some of the things we were advised to do are no longer applicable. People now have too many things to distract them. We grew up without these distractions. It is better if our advice is given in Inuktitut, rather than in English, but some young children don’t understand Inuktitut anymore, so this knowledge should be available in English as well. If the parents are constantly bickering with each other this affects how the child will grow up.

We have different words for things in different dialects.
Do we use different words for things when we talk to children?
Naqi: Yes. We use different language with children because they are still developing. When we talk to them we shouldn’t use complicated language. When they say something or they start asking what things are, that’s when you start teaching them language.

Were children told not to ask questions in the old days?
Uqsuralik: Certainly. We were not encouraged to ask questions. We never encouraged children to ask questions. In the old days when a child was a real chatterbox, people really noticed him or her. A child’s language developed on its own. We did not encourage children to talk like adults. People were happier with children who took a while to learn to talk. We would not know people’s names when we were little girls. Nowadays, even young children call me Uqsuralik. We never knew the names of adults. The only way I found out my parents’ names was because other adults called them that. If we didn’t hear the names being used we never found out what the names were until later in our lives. Within our own families, we used kinship terms. We never encouraged small children to start talking early, especially using adult words.

Naqi: When they were able to sit up on their own, we used words such as uquuquq, something furry in baby talk, or apaapa, food. If a child said uquuquq on its own, we believed that the hunters would come back with a seal or other animal. When children started crawling around, when they sat up, they were really cute. You would clap their hands together and say, “Patigi, patigi, patigi,” “Pat a cake, pat a cake, pat a cake.”

Uqsuralik: Then we would say, “Iliqisamaaq, move your head sideways.”

Naqi: Then they would move their heads sideways. We would say “Aatiiq, nod up and down,” and they would nod their heads up and down.

Uqsuralik: Of course we tried to toilet-train children as soon as possible. When we wanted to know if they needed to pee, we said, “Haa, haa.” When they pee, we don’t say, quijutit [adult language], we say haaqtutit [child language], you have peed.
Did older children have their own language?

Uqsuralik: Yes. We never corrected them. They developed naturally, without ever being corrected. We would only teach them if we noted there was something they were having difficulty with. We were never taught through words. It was only through observing and listening that we learned.

Nowadays children ask more questions. How is this perceived?

Uqsuralik: It is fine now because it is the way of life today. Children are a lot more outgoing and curious and not afraid to ask questions. It is fine if the child asks questions today. Of course they don't know the Inuktitut language well and the only way to learn more is through asking questions. Because we don't have the same opportunity to live the language, it is better to ask questions these days. Some of the old words are being forgotten. Even though I am old, I have forgotten some words, especially about hunting gear and qajaq parts. I can't remember them all. Today, we welcome questions about language. When children started going to school they lost a lot of language. No wonder. They weren't allowed to speak Inuktitut. Our true language was being forgotten. Today, we are trying to bring it back. When my daughters or grandchildren ask about the language because they want to teach it to someone else, this brings me joy.

You said that when a child was learning how to talk, that you were happy when the child did not ask questions. Why was that?

Uqsuralik: It is common knowledge that a young child should not ask questions. When a child doesn't ask questions you are very proud of the child. We always tell our own children not to ask any questions when we go visiting. In the old days we would try not to encourage a child to talk because speech would develop naturally. We would use baby language, apaapa for food, for example. We would teach them how to eat and identify food. If they urinated you would always say, “Haa, haa.” In the old days we didn’t have diapers. What we would do was put the baby on our lap, put the feet together and hold the feet up. You would always hang on to their feet. They would start learning at a very young age. You would start immediately after they were born. Every time they would pee you would say, “Haa, haa.” The baby that you were holding would start understanding right away to go in the little can. Of course they would start learning right away. The secret was to hold on to their bare feet with warm hands. Warmth would always make them pee faster.
Maybe they didn’t want their children to ask questions because they wanted them to remain children longer?

Uqsuralik: They didn’t want them to learn how to speak too quickly and become chatterboxes. Nowadays people encourage children to ask questions.

How did you show praise to your children when they learned something new?

Uqsuralik: We were very proud of them when they said their first word. We were also proud of them when they started walking. Anything that was a first, you were proud for them. We didn’t hesitate to show it either.

Do you still give your children praise in their adult life?

Uqsuralik: Yes.

Could you tell us more about how criticizing children can affect their self-esteem?

Uqsuralik: We should never, never tell our children that they are really bad. If we keep saying that, if they keep hearing that they are terrible, or how bad they are, they will begin to believe it. If they hear that they are good, their self-esteem is raised. If we see our children not doing well at school, we shouldn’t say, “You are doing terribly at school. You are not paying attention.” What we should be looking for is any improvement. We should tell them, “Please keep on learning. If you persist your grades will get better.” If they hear that, then they start believing that they are good and they can do it. But if you keep putting them down, then they will start thinking badly about themselves. If we love our children and believe in them and are positive with them, then they start believing that they can do anything. If children are always told they are terrible, they begin to believe that. If children are constantly praised, then their behaviour will improve. That is how we are supposed to raise our children to have good self-esteem. Some children are difficult to deal with. Some grandchildren are very difficult, but of course that is to be expected. Persisting in positive reinforcement will always prevail.

When you were a teenager, did your mother ever talk to you about menstruation?

Uqsuralik: No. There was no real discussion about menstruation. There were some girls who started early and there were some girls who started later. We were told not to go
outside when we first started. When you started your first period it would seem like the whole community knew about it. That was what you would think. It would seem like every community member was looking at you. That’s what it felt like. In the old days we were very shy about menstruating. Today that’s not the case at all. Of course it was inevitable that a day would come when you would start your periods. Once you started, you were very shy about it and you didn’t want to go outside at all. We were told to make sure we didn’t get menstrual blood on our clothing.

What did you use?

Uqsuralik: We used rabbitskins a long time ago. When I first started my periods, it was after the Hudson’s Bay had supplies. There was this lady that had some Kotex and she gave me some. They were the old-fashioned kind and not comfortable at all. We even used to hide our used Kotex or sanitary napkins. We would be very discreet about it.

Did you menstruate every month?

Uqsuralik: Yes, it was every month.

Naqi: I would have my period for three days, but it was a very light flow. Because I grew rapidly, people thought I had started my periods before I actually did.

Uqsuralik: You had to inform your mother immediately when you had your period.

Were children told about the dangers of rifles?

Uqsuralik: Yes. We were lectured never to point a gun at a person and not to load a gun before locating wildlife. In the old days ammunition used to be scarce so we never wasted it. It’s only when you were sure of a shot that you used your ammunition. There were single-shot rifles in those days, not the ones with the magazines. I think rifles were safer then too. We were always told never to carry a gun that was loaded in case it fell and it went off. Of course children wanted to go hunting and they had to respect the rules. The only way parents would let the children go out was if they were following the rules. The only time you would put a bullet in a rifle was when you were going to shoot an animal. In the old days, men used to make their own ammunition. Children were not allowed to use store-bought ammunition. Children would use the ammunition that they made themselves. Even though there was a scarcity of some items it was a lot of fun. We weren’t lazy to do things. People were never bored. When you think back it was a happy time.

Should we teach our children to fear fierce animals?
Uqsuralik: We should not teach them to fear animals. We should teach our children not to toy with or abuse or mistreat any animal. They should treat an animal with respect. Otherwise children will be paid back one day because of the things they had been doing. We tell children not to abuse animals because one day the animals might pay them back. It could be by a walrus tipping over a qajaq. The walrus will go after a person who used to abuse animals, especially if they didn’t kill the animal for food. People should only kill an animal if they are going to eat it. If you can’t use an animal for food you shouldn’t go after it. People should not go after silaat, the animals and birds that are albino, for those kinds of animals are hard to kill.

How about earth eggs?

Uqsuralik: You are never to take earth eggs at all. If it’s not a bird’s egg and it is just lying on the ground you are not to touch it at all. For if you do, the weather will turn bad afterwards.

Did your mother tell you this when you were a child?

Uqsuralik: Yes. We were told not to disturb these eggs or it would turn really windy and the weather would be bad for the whole summer.

Can you tell even small children about this?

Uqsuralik: Yes, you can tell small children not to touch eggs that are not in a nest. We were also told not to touch eggs that were too developed. Inuqaliqpat is when the chick is well developed inside the egg. There is a cut-off point where you no longer pick up eggs, as we would rather see the baby hatch.

If children were caused to fear spooky things were they easily spooked as adults?

Naqi: I never grew up like that. I have never been scared of anything spooky. Once I heard a person that I couldn’t see who was chanting an aqaq at me with love, but I pretended not to hear the chant even though I was beside this person’s grave.

Uqsuralik: I myself am easily spooked.

Naqi: If you are easily spooked, you have to make your hand into the shape of a polar bear so the things that are spooking you will think you are a bear.

How can people prevent themselves from being easily spooked?
Uqsuralik: If I am out on the land I don’t get spooked. I can walk by myself. But if I am at home alone, that’s when I get scared. I cannot sleep in the house alone, even though I am now an old woman. I am still scared.

Naqi: When children were playing and it was time for them to leave, I would ask the children were not from our household, “Are you scared to go home alone?” There was one child who said she was, so, while she was going, I stood on the porch and said, “Tauva, tauva, there you go, there you go.” I told the child to say taima, that’s enough, when she got home.

Uqsuralik: When I was a child I didn’t get spooked. It was only when I became an adult that I started getting spooked.

Naqi: My mother used to tell me not to be scared, because there were no such things as tuurngait even though other people might believe in them. She used to say, “Satan is the only tuurngaq.” I used to believe her. After my mother died, in the days when dogs were loose, some dogs would really stare at you.

Uqsuralik: They would bark at you.

Naqi: They would really bark at you and stare at you, and sometimes they would follow you.

Uqsuralik: Or they would run away. Last summer I was spooked while we were berrypicking. We were just women. The wind started to pick up. The men who had taken us up there had left. It was dark. It was 11:00 at night. My daughter-in-law said to me, “It seems like there is a tent flapping around.” I am kind of hard of hearing nowadays and I said that I had not heard anything, but I started to get spooked about what my daughter-in-law was hearing. I heard something that sounded like a rock being thrown. A polar bear will never answer a person back. Being spooked, I shouted, “Are you a bear?” It was a person that answered, “No, I am an Inuk.” I had such a relaxing feeling inside. It was another family that had arrived. We didn’t hear them coming to the same area because it was windy. What a joyous feeling that was, what a relief. The first thing I had thought of was that it was a tuurngaq.

I don’t understand the word kaggaqtuq?

Naqi: Kaggaqtuq is a word to describe when a person is so frightened they have become pale. We were taught that if that happened you should put the person upside down so that the blood would go back to their heads. We were also told to massage the neck with an upward motion.
If people made fun of animals what would happen to them?

Uqsuralik: People who abused animals would *gaqilkutuq*, start losing their ability to hear birds.

Is there any way they could be forgiven?

If they totally confessed what they had done, they could be forgiven. But as long as the person never confessed, as long as he or she kept this inside, as long as this person never talked about it, it would always be eating them away inside. The best thing to do is to confess to a person they feel comfortable with. In the old days there was this woman that I knew, who was in labour for a long time. When the labour was dragging on they asked the woman to confess, and as soon as she confessed the baby came out. There’s an old saying that as soon as a woman confessed, then the delivery would proceed with ease.

Were you told to be afraid of the aqsarniit, the Northern Lights, because they might chop your head off? Were there other things you were taught to be scared of?

Uqsuralik: Yes. We were told to be very wary of wolves because the wolves might catch us. We were told not to wander too far because a bear might catch us. These things were said to us so we wouldn’t wander too far.

Naqi: We were told that it was hard to tell if wolves were around because they hid very well.

Uqsuralik: Wolves howling sound far away but in fact they are very close. We were also told not to pretend to howl in case the wolf thought we were another wolf and came to us. We used to pretend to howl if we were sure our parents wouldn’t find out.

Were you told not to say you wanted to see a polar bear because you might run into one when you least expected it?

Naqi: I’ve never heard of anyone wanting to see a bear.

Were you told in the old days not to whistle at the aqsarniit, the Northern Lights?

Uqsuralik: Yes. We used to fear that our heads would be cut off if we whistled at the aqsarniit.
Were there other things that you were told as children which were scary?

Uqsuralik: No, not really. It was just the aqsarniit. We used to be scared they might cut off our heads if we whistled. Other than that the only things we were scared of were burial sites.

Were you ever told not to take things without asking because you could be grabbed by aggajaat beings that were hands with only three fingers?

Uqsuralik: We were told not to take things without asking because aggajaat, beings that were hands with three fingers, might just grab us, especially if we were in an empty house.

During the days of pittailiniq, observance of taboos, did children also have things they had to abstain from?

Naqi: We didn’t really live through that era. It was our ancestors who practised that. We were born after this practice had ended. We only know of this by word of mouth. What they went through must have been difficult. I have not heard of children having to go through this. It was only adults and women of childbearing age. Women who had given birth had the most pittailiniit to follow. When they were giving birth they had to be alone. They even had to abstain from eating certain foods. When you think about what they had to go through, it really makes you feel for them. Because this is no longer practised, we don’t really know what children had to go through.

How do you make a child’s mind strong?

Uqsuralik: The best way to do this is through balanced discipline. Don’t let them become quick-tempered. You need to be consistent with them. If you consistently show both love and discipline, the child will grow nicely. Children will become fearful of you if they have been intimidated too much.

We sometimes see children who give up easily. How can we get them out of that state?

Uqsuralik: You can help them in many ways. You can play with them. Also spending time with them outside is of great value for a child’s mind. Don’t just watch them sitting inside the house. Even small children like to be outside. It is very important that a child goes outside and plays and is not just inside the house storing up their energy. Some children today do not seem to miss their parents as much as we used to. It is because the mother has less physical contact with the child. We grew up being in constant contact
with our mother. We were in her amauti while she was doing daily chores. Today parents put their babies in a room, give them a bottle and leave them alone. We used to carry babies on our backs. As soon as they would fall asleep we would start doing things. Babies were a lot calmer. Babies hardly cried because they were with us all the time and had physical contact with us. When the child and the mother have limited physical contact, then the child becomes hyperactive and difficult to deal with. It is very important to have physical contact when you are raising a child.

In a way, we try not to let them get too close because we have to go to classes and we travel.

Uqsuralik: Yes, that is part of the problem. I myself travel now, and I am away from my grandchildren and my children. One thing that is changing now is that when you travel children expect you to bring something back for them. One of the things we do today is try to bring back gifts so they don’t cry for you so much when you leave. We travel a lot more today. I guess bringing back gifts is one of the ways to bribe them not to cry so much and not to feel so sad.

What would you do with the baby when you were doing your chores?

Naqi: In the old days we always asked our children to go outside so we could clean-up. There was never anything that we needed to be rushed about. If a baby couldn’t sleep you put the baby on your back and tried to put the baby to sleep by moving around. At the same time you would be doing your chores. Even though you were doing your chores, eventually the baby would fall asleep. Even if you took the baby out of your amauti it still wouldn’t wake up. Sometimes we would not finish our chores because the baby would take a lot of our time. You would have to rock back and forth so the baby would go to sleep when it was in the back of your amauti. Some babies would awaken instantly if someone started talking. It was very quiet in those days. There were other babies who were used to noises. The only time they awoke was when they had to go to the bathroom.

We used to have these little potties. If it was a boy, any old container would do. If it was a little girl it would be a bigger container with a wider opening. They used to pee and then they would fall back asleep again. They were able to hold their urine all through the night. Today, because children are in diapers all the time, they don’t learn how to use a potty as quickly. We did not consider it difficult to toilet-train a child. As soon as our breast milk got salty we stopped breastfeeding and immediately the baby would start eating solid food. We were told not to let the child breastfeed after it has learned to eat solid food because this would drag on to their toddler years.

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Childrearing Practices
In the old days when you had to travel without your children, how did you treat them so they didn’t miss you too much?

Uqsuralik: In the old days people did not travel that far. We never really left our children.

If the mother went hunting with her husband, where were the children?

Uqsuralik: The children would be left with the grandmother. It was only when the mother went out hunting with the husband that the child was left with the grandmother. That’s how it used to be. The child did not mind the parents going out. That was the only time children would be left with someone else. They would cry a little bit, but they did not mind spending time with the grandparents at all. In the old days we used to spend a lot of time with our grandparents. They used to take care of grandchildren a lot in the old days. I used to spend a lot of time with my grandparents and I was very close to them. I always used to sleep with my grandmother. In the old days we grew up always sleeping with someone else. Today we don’t even sleep with our children, but in the old days we always slept with an adult. Because of that, you developed a very strong bond. When you had cold feet they would always help you warm your feet up. Grandparents were very, very helpful.

Should we tell our children to visit elders?

Naqi: My mother used to tell me that the elders would never forget any type of help they were given. She said any help I gave them would come back to me. I really believe that now. Even going to see them to find out how they are can be useful. You wouldn’t know if an elder was going through a difficult time if you didn’t keep checking up on them.

My mother told me not to cry at the grave of a person I was missing. My mother also told me that we should go close by the burial site of our relatives and spend time with them, doing activities such as cooking outdoors with them. She wanted me to continue this practice as long as I could. In the old days, they used to leave something at the grave. This is called tunillatuuq. You gave something to the deceased relatives. We would make a little fire and have tea not far from the grave site as if we were having tea with our deceased relatives. If a relative had made a request about something they wanted done after they were dead, you should honour the request. If there were a lot of children in the family, the older sister or brother would first choose something that had belonged to the person who had died, and then you would take what you wanted to keep. We weren’t to keep all the possessions for ourselves. They had to be shared among the relatives. Otherwise it could cause disharmony. These were the words that were given to us.
I remained in the qammap I shared with my mother after she died. Her personal effects remained there and I had them all to myself. She told me that I might dream about the personal effects of a person that was no longer with me. This has come true. I rarely dream of my deceased relatives, but I have listened to the requests they have made of me in my dreams. In the old days when you made a new parka out of fabric you always took the trim off the old one. The trim wasn’t worn out, so when you made a new parka you always took it off and put it on the new one. I used to have a parka made out of seal pup pelts that my mother folded and used as a pillow. I never unfolded it. Twice I had a dream about going to get my mother’s parka and removing the trim. So I firmly believe the elders’ words. What they request will one day come back to you through dreams.

Today when we have daughters, especially because they are not with us all the time, we ask them to tell us if they have been sexually assaulted. Did they tell children that in the old days as well?

Naqi: In the old days, Nutaraq, my aunt, showed us one time about shaking hands. She told us not to scratch back if a man scratched you on the palm, because if we did we would be agreeing to having sex. We were told that if a man finds a woman he likes and he desires her, there doesn’t seem to be any other woman around for him at all.

In the old days we used more than one boat while we were travelling and the boats would be beached together. I was sitting up at the bow of the boat. When I looked over at another boat, I saw a man who was lying on his stomach. Every time I looked at him he would raise his eyebrows. I would look away when he did that. He was trying to entice me, trying to get me to have sex. He was making advances towards me. When we reached our destination at Pangniqtuuq, my older sister, Seemee’s mother said, “Sister, I found that strange.” I said, “What?” She said, “That man was raising his eyebrows at no one.” I asked, “Who was he doing it to?” It turned out that he did that to all women. My sister had been shown by our mother how to say no with her whole face. I never got a chance to do that to him because he never raised his eyebrows to me again. Older women knew a lot about advances and how to respond to them.

What does nanguluttuq mean?

Naqi: It means causing disharmony. You shouldn’t defend your child too much. If you do, the child will become aggressive. Not only aggressive but also bossy. This happens when people defend children. It used to be said that you would regret the way they would act later on, because the child would no longer listen to you. They would think they could do anything by themselves.
Uqsuralik was saying that boys were trained to become leaders, but you should not let them dominate everything.

Naqi: No, you shouldn’t. If children have their way all the time, this can spoil them. As young mothers we were told, “One day this boy is going to be stronger than you are so you should not give in to him all the time while he is small.” If a child wanted something and you gave in all the time, when you refused something they would start crying until they got their way. Many parents give in to the child if they cry. You create this behaviour in the child. We were told that when the child gets bigger he will end up dominating you.

Should you not support the child all the time?

Naqi: If the child comes home crying and you ask, “What happened to you? Who did this to you?”, it’s not going to help the child. If the child enters the house crying, but he had not been crying outside, he wants you to think something had happened to him. We used to stick our hands out and ask the child to share his crying. When an older child who has been playing with other children comes in crying and says, “This person hurt me right here,” you always say, “Pua, there is nothing wrong with it.” If they sat down on the side of the platform, you pretended to sharpen your ulu and said, “I’ll cut it so the pain will go away.” The child would yell, “I want to keep my lungs,” or whatever other part you were going to pretend to cut out. Children are so believing. These are some of the techniques that you used to raise a child.

You should not defend them. You cannot take their side or let them dominate the situation, otherwise children will never think they are in the wrong. It shouldn’t be like that. When you know the child is able to understand, you talk to them. You teach them and say things such as, “Please play nicely with others so others will be nice to you.” We used to have best friends in the old days. If our best friend had another friend, and the new friend was trying to take our place in the friendship, we would just leave the friend alone. We would say, “She is going to get over it.” We would just wait. Even though our friends did that, we did not talk about this at home. We just went through this with our friends. The only time you spoke about it was if your parents asked, “What happened to you? What did they do to you?” And we would just respond, “It’s not worth talking about,” because we had been taught not to talk about such things. My mother used to reach out her hand and say, “Put the cause of your crying here.” That’s how we were taught.

We would like some information on dealing with children as they mature. Why aren’t we supposed to defend our children too much?
Uqsuralik: You should never defend children in their presence because they can get an
attitude. They know they are going to be defended in the future. Their mentality
changes and they take advantage of the situation. It can ruin the child’s disposition.
They begin to tell their parents every time they think someone has done something
wrong to them, knowing they are going to be defended. We have always been told not
to defend children in their presence or otherwise they are going to become spoiled
children. We still follow this today. We don’t defend our children in front of them. Even
though you want to defend your child, you place the blame on them. You might say,
“Did you start that? Maybe it was you who started the fight, maybe you started the
whole commotion?” Deep inside you want to lash out at the other child but we make
our child think about what is going on.

What happens to children that have been defended too much?
Uqsuralik: When children have been defended too much they gossip when they grow
up. Once they hear something about another person they immediately talk about it with
someone else. They are looking for that same attention again. If I think that I am being
defended a lot, then I would naturally go and gossip. That is why we always make the
children think about the commotion and not show them that we are defending them.
When you raise your child this way, the commotion gets resolved. They learn to resolve
conflicts, and the whole situation settles down. But if you don’t do this, then they
become gossips. When you always defend a child, then the child starts saying, “No, I
didn’t do that.” They start lying because they know they are going to be defended
anyway. When children have been raised properly they display confidence and they
show people that they are not gossips. Instead, they are very considerate and sensitive
people. That’s the result of not defending a child. You can defend your children but they
should never know it. Parents and other kids pick it up right away when a child is
defended too much. That is the reason we do not defend openly. In our hearts we defend
them, but we do not show it.

What should you do when a child is trying to be bossy?
Uqsuralik: If a child doesn’t get something and they cry and you give in, they start
thinking that they are the boss. Over-disciplining and shouting at them is also bad. If a
child has always been shouted at they carry this with them into their adult life. Even if
they are hyperactive and they seem very difficult you should not raise your voice to
them. As soon as you show the child pure, unconditional love, without raising your
voice to them, without being physically abusive, they grow beautifully. If we truly love
our children we will not defend them. In our hearts we defend them but we do not show it.
We just tell them honestly, “If you do that, people are going to be bad to you, they are
going to retaliate against you.” Just be honest with them and they grow beautifully. Some children do listen and follow what you say. Sometimes when parents don’t do this, the child takes control of the parents. As long as we show the child both the bad side and the good side, balance them, they will grow beautifully. If you are leaning too much in one direction, you are going to spoil the child. The child is not the boss. You should not slap anywhere but the bum. You should not hit a child anywhere else but there. You shouldn’t raise your voice to them. You should not stare at them, either. Staring is a bad thing also. Just slap them, give them a good little sting on the bum. That’s all you have to do. Don’t hit them anywhere else on their bodies.

Naqi: As Uqsuralik said, “We should not defend our children in front of them.” We were also told that if we heard something that wasn’t entirely true, we should ignore it because gossip was a very dangerous thing. This was taught to me by my mother. She taught me to distance myself from this kind of thing when it was going on. She also said that friends gossiping can ruin friendships as well. We were often told not to gossip about other people or our friends because it could ruin a relationship. My mother said that in the Bible it was written to love thy neighbour as thyself. She also told me that if people ever told me I didn’t have a father I was to answer, “We all have a father that is in heaven.” I never knew my father.

I used to sleep in the same bed as my mother. Even as a teenager, I was still doing that. I went into the qammaq one time, and there were two men, seated on different sides. One of them I had never seen. He had a long black beard. I kept staring at this person, even though I didn’t want to. I went out of the qammaq because I was beginning to stare at him. When I went back in again, my mother said, “Please don’t keep going out, as it is late at night. Go to sleep instead.” Because I was in the habit of listening to my mother, I went to bed. My older sister Sikuliaq Annie also lived with us. She was also a teenager. I fell asleep quickly. I think I went to sleep before my mother did. Then I felt something warm beside me. I had completely forgotten about the man who was staying at our house, because I thought he was just visiting. When I realized that the man with the black beard and black hair next to me was sleeping with my mother, I kicked her and said, “Mother shall I sleep with my sister?” She elbowed me. As he was still there, I went to the other side of the bed very quickly and I had no sleep all night. As I always slept with my mother, I never had my own bedding, so I didn’t have any covers. I was awake because I was so siaqqajuq, so hurt and bothered. I think that is how teenagers feel these days. I should have expressed what was bothering me. If I had talked about it that feeling would have gone away. But I kept it inside myself, and it just developed and became a bigger problem than what it actually was.

The youngest of my two older sisters, Kullu, was my mother through my name and I avoided visiting her because she would know immediately that something was bothering me. Although my skin is very light she would see that I was pale and ask
what was bothering me. I was told not to talk about those kinds of feelings because to do so would cause disharmony. I never talked about this incident in the bed with my mother. This incident shook me so much that I grew up never wanting to touch the skin of a man. Even as a young teenager, I slept with my mother for comfort. I was not accustomed to sleeping alone. I now know what people who have lost a spouse have gone through. This is something we all have to go through. I am going through this now. For a while after you are left alone you are constantly searching. That’s the way life is. Other people after us will go through the same thing.

When the child is crying and wants something, should we give in only after they stop crying?

Uq sulfurik: Yes. It is only after they stop crying that you should give them something. Even if the child is crying you should ignore it. You shouldn’t tell the child that you don’t have something when you do. They are going to find out sooner or later that you do have something and that you aren’t telling the truth. You should just be honest with them and tell them not to ask for more. Let them know that enough is enough. Let them know that you have more but they are not allowed to have it. If they see something and that is the only one, then give them half and put the other half away and they will know that is the last one. They can learn very quickly if you are honest with them from the beginning. They will know when enough is enough and they won’t bother asking. They know they are probably going to get that later on but not today. That’s how you should raise your child. You should practise that.
Can you shape what a child is going to be like in the future?

Naqi: When I was a child this practice was no longer followed. But our ancestors in the days of the angakkuit used to do that. The angakkuq used to take the baby and pretend to paddle a qajaq and pretend to harpoon. Baby boys would be placed on the lap and they used to pretend the small baby was out hunting. You had to hold their little hands, move their arms, and power the qajaq. You pretended to paddle, and you got ahold of the fist and pretended to throw a harpoon. If it was a girl we didn’t do that unless she had the name of a hunter. Hair is used to represent gender. Looking at you female students, you would all have been considered male. My daughter in Yellowknife who is named after my mother has always had short hair. Although she is named after my mother, she is also named after my brother Mosesie. She has never had braids. She has always had short hair. In the old days if a girl had the name of a hunter you always treated her as a hunter. She wore men’s clothes and followed men’s activities.

When they have the name of a man, are little girls raised differently?

Uqsuralik: While the child is growing up, some do take after the person they are named after. Some girls tend to be tomboys at a young age. We think they are following their name. The girl is dressed like a boy. It is only for a short period of time that they are raised like that. Some girls want to be like that even when they are older and some just want to be like that for a while. When a boy has a woman’s name they braid his hair because of the name. They are raised like this to show love to the person they were named after. That’s why they practise this. They look like girls for a while. It is only for a short time that you should do that. You should stop this when they come of age because if it is not done soon enough the boy will keep some female characteristics. They won’t think of themselves as real men.

Did boys that had a woman’s name braid their hair?

Naqi: Yes. It is only when they became aware of other people noticing them that they began to be embarrassed. That’s when they stopped having braids.

Did boys let their hair grow long so they would be fast runners?
Uqsuralik: I have never heard about boys being asked to let their hair grow so they could be swift runners. I have never heard this. Young girls in those days used to have four braids and one in the back as well. When braids are tied at the sides of the head it is called *tullilijaqtuq*.

Did women also braid their hair?

Naqi: Women would braid their hair from the front and keep the braids at the back. Because we didn’t have elastics, we would take long pieces of yarn and braid them into our hair to tie our braids with. You would do this so you could tie your hair into a *qiliqti*, a knot. You never saw a woman with loose hair. You parted your hair and wound your braids into a *qiliqti* at the sides. Then you hung beads from your *qiliqti*. If you made them too long, they would touch the floor when you bent over.

Were girls who were treated as males stronger than other girls?

Naqi: I have heard from doctors that you shouldn’t keep a child in the gender role you have chosen until they get embarrassed. You should stop this before that happens. If it is a masculine gender that is chosen then you have to stop it before the girl realizes that she is a girl, so she isn’t damaged emotionally. That’s the same for little boys. Before the child starts remembering, if we want the child to have boys’ clothes or girls’ clothes it is fine. When it comes to the point where a girl has men’s clothes and people ask, “Are you a boy?”, that could cause her great embarrassment. In the old days we didn’t have a lot of clothes. My daughter had her hair cut short but she did not wear men’s clothing. I did not treat her as a male.

You said that girls who were named after a male would be raised like a man and boys named after a female would be raised as a woman. Could you tell us more about when you should stop treating them as such?

Uqsuralik: I only have one son. My only son used to yearn for a younger brother. He tried to treat one of his sisters as his younger brother. My daughter acted like a boy. She had a toy gun. She didn’t want to have long hair. Then her sisters started saying that Kunuk might start thinking she’s a boy if she kept doing things like a man. Some of my daughters were saying, “She wants to have a man’s knife, she can’t even use an ulu anymore.” So when she reached her young teens, we made her realize she had to stop living in a man’s world. She does everything like a woman now. You have to stop this behaviour before they get too old. If a girl is being raised like a man, you have to make
her realize in her very young teens that she is a woman. My daughter Kunuk still likes
to go hunting. She is able to sew all the things that women sew and she is better at it
than her sisters.

Should we embarrass them about this to help make them realize
their true gender?

Naqi: You should not embarrass them about their tomboyishness if they are a girl or
their feminineness if they are a boy. You should not embarrass them because it will
mentally affect them and hurt them permanently. I had a daughter who used to be a real
tomboy. She turned away from that and started living like a little girl. She was named
after Jacopoosie, who drowned. She never wanted long hair even when she was a young
girl. I never dressed her as a man because I feared it might affect her mentally, but she
never wanted to have long hair because she was named after Jacopoosie who was a
man. She always wanted to go hunting with her father. Now she has three of her own
children. It is true that when they carry on a name, they continue the traits of the person
they were named after for a while.

When the child gets older, do they accept their true gender?

Uqsuralik: Yes. They accept that they are girls, or boys, but they do remember their
childhood. In my opinion, I am sure they miss some of the tomboyishness or
feminineness of their early childhood. My daughter still talks about her younger days.
She firmly believes she was not a girl. And in some ways I think she misses that. Her
uncles always treated her like a boy. They even cut the shoulder of a gun so it would fit
her. They made her a little gun that she wasn’t able to put real bullets in and gave it to
er as a toy. Her uncles put a nail through the barrel so she wasn’t able to put a bullet
in. That was her toy. When we went hunting with her at a young age she would say, “Oh
no, I forgot my gun.” That’s when we realized that this girl really thought she was a boy.
We decided we had to make her realize that she was a female and that she was going to
have to live as a woman. When you make them realize they are female, they do start
acting like women. But you have to make them realize this when they are still young.

Have any boys who were raised as girls because they were named
after females been unable to accept their real gender?

Uqsuralik: I think you know Ugjualuk. He is the guy who is funny on television. He
used to have long hair and now he acts like a man, even though girls used to have him
as a best friend. Now he is like any other man. But he remembers the old days and how
he used to be with all the girls.
Your daughter, was she more capable than her sisters at certain things?

Uqsuralik: She was neither more nor less capable. She was just average. Now she can sew better than her older sisters. Now she just wants to make clothing and sew, just like any other woman.

Did they lecture young girls about how they should be with their husbands?

Naqi: When we were young girls, we didn’t want a husband at all. I myself used to say that. My mother used to say, “When you become of age, men will start noticing you.” When a man goes after a woman, they always tell the mother and father that they will help them hunt. Because my mother only had daughters, she was told that the only sons she would have were her sons-in-law. My mother never responded to that because she didn’t believe that her sons-in-law would be like her own sons. She used to move from camp to camp when she was young. I grew up in one camp because we had no one to move us. I didn’t have a father or brothers. I grew up in a household without any men. The only man I knew was my uncle Paulusi, whom my grandson is named after. I was named after an old woman, Paula. My uncle’s nickname was also Paula. He went down south for school so he could speak both English and Inuktitut. He had a really strong dogteam. His mother was really tiny. She remained tiny because of the mental stress she went through as a child. Paula was not the only son that she had. She had had other sons who had died. When a hunter doesn’t come back, it’s the worst way to lose a relative. You just have to accept the death. We cannot always follow the advice we are given to prepare us for this kind of experience.

My mother told me that when I became old enough to have a husband, I would have to go with him. She said that when I became attractive to men, they would start looking at me. If a man was not going to be helping around the household, then she would not approve the match. If a hunter still had parents, he would have less chance of being approved. My husband just had a father and not a mother. That’s the reason why she approved of him marrying me. It was going to be a better arrangement for my mother and me.

If you are raised by an aggressive father, even raised voices will make you fearful. My husband was just a small child when he said, “I am going to get a wife one day. I don’t want to be like my father.” He used to say that to himself. When he started spending long periods of time out hunting, his mother used to think people would talk about this. His mother eventually died while in labour. We used to be told not to say anything that would cause stress to the mother. A woman should not be in any stress...
when she is pregnant. That was one of the beliefs. If a pregnant woman had gone through stress, she would have difficulties or the baby would have problems. Her one-year-old, my husband’s sister, Miali, was adopted by Arnaq.

Did your father-in-law get another wife?

Naqi: He never had another wife because he had so much regret. He knew that he had put his wife through a lot of stress. When you are pregnant you shouldn’t have a lot of stress. That was the reason his wife died when she went into labour. She had a daughter named Miali, and that is who my daughter is named after. I didn’t like him at all. He had a deep voice and a long beard.

When his wife died, did your father-in-law become a single parent?

Naqi: Yes. He continued to go hunting. The eldest child was more than able to take care of the younger siblings. Kullu, my older sister babysat them sometimes. She taught them how to sew and how to be capable. Of course we can’t learn to sew overnight. It is only through practise. Even though you don’t feel like making something, you have to persist and keep on until you become a very good seamstress.

Did other camp members make things for this man who no longer had a wife?

Naqi: No. His daughter learned how to sew and make things for him. The rest of the women in the camp taught her how to sew. This was before we had fabric. In the winter we would make caribou clothing and in the spring it would be sealskin. We made pants out of sealskin. During the seal pup season in March we used to make white-skinned kamiik out of aged skin, as it didn’t freeze as much as dark skin. When my husband came back, his kamiik were always bloody. If it was caribou blood it would come off but seal blood didn’t come off as easily.

Can you tell us about childrearing practices?

Naqi: Inuit have a lot of knowledge about childrearing. We never used to have babysitters in those days. We took care of our own children. We always had our babies on our backs. When the baby fell asleep we would place it on the bed. We listened to the advice we were given. You never asked an older sibling to amaaq, to carry the baby on their back, especially if the baby was heavy. We were told that if children do this when they are too young, they will have lung problems when they become adults. That is very true. Even though they don’t seem physically tired, when they are too young and you ask them to carry a baby around, they will develop lung problems later on in life. We
always took care not to have girls that were too young carrying babies on their backs. They could carry them on their shoulders, but only after the child could walk. That was a piece of advice we were given. Annie Tiglik my niece, and I used to carry babies on our backs when we were old enough. Even though our camps were very close to each other, we were the furthest down from Qipisa. Ours was further than Upirngivik and Illutalik. They were all within walking distance of Qipisa. We used to walk there. That’s how it used to be. We had a very free life. We never labelled them as outpost camps. We knew these places as fall camps, winter camps, spring camps, or summer camps.

Were boys asked to carry babies?

Naqi: Yes, they were.

Uqsuralik: Boys would carry babies for their mothers. Boys would be very willing to carry babies on their backs using an amautil because if they did they would catch beluga or narwhal. This is true. My brother, Iqaluk, for example, used to carry a lot of babies on his back and he became very successful at catching beluga. He used to carry babies in an amautil. He was a premature baby when he was born. He really liked to carry babies in an amautil because he really wanted to be successful at catching beluga and he was. This is true.

Did your youngest nurse the longest?

Naqi: Children are all different. There are some that want to nurse for a longer period of time.

Were young children forbidden from carrying heavy babies?

Naqi: There would be young girls who would try to carry babies on their backs but they could easily lose their balance. They were not supposed to do that. Later in their adult life and as elders they would start having lung problems. Also young hunters were not allowed to carry heavy packs at a very young age. We were not to ask them to do this. I do believe that young children should not carry heavy things. When they run it seems like they breathe shallowly. They start running out of breath.

Mosesie used to be like that. He had lung problems. His lungs expanded too quickly at a young age and stopped growing. This is not good for breathing and the lungs tend to fill with mucus. When he was young he was asked to carry a caribou rib cage filled with caribou legs. Later he told me that when he was asked to carry it he whimpered. Someone asked him if he was tired and he said, “Not now. I was getting tired on the uphill.” It seemed like he was breathing from the bottom of his throat and not from his lungs.
Inuit did not receive information about medical problems then. Later the doctors said that he had carried something long ago and the damage was permanent. The doctors know that when the lungs work too hard at a very young age that you can permanently destroy the tissue. They found out by testing him that he did destroy his lungs. He blew into this apparatus to see how long he could blow to find out why he had difficulties breathing. What our elders said was true and it was confirmed by the doctors. He was not abused or treated like an orphan. I think that that hunter he was with just didn’t want to leave the meat behind.

When a girl was trying to beat up her baby brother, what happened?

Uqsuralik: Little girls were not to be the boss. If a little girl was trying to dominate a younger child she was told immediately to stop. Boys were encouraged to be the leaders, the dominant ones. If the little girl was showing dominance, she was immediately told to stop. The boys were always taught to be the dominant ones. They were not to be overly dominant, but they were to be the leaders. Men are different from us. They have to go out and fend for themselves on the land. If we trained them that we were the boss then they wouldn’t be able to make it out on the land alone. Women are more easily angered and that was another reason they were asked not to exercise dominance except when their brothers were doing things they were not supposed to do. Then they could exercise dominance over them by telling them to be good. We did not allow our brothers to exercise their will in these cases. We weren’t allowed to exercise dominance through anger.

How was a brother to treat his sister?

Uqsuralik: A sister was always encouraged to be nice to her brother. We used to visit a lot. If the little brother said, “They have this, they have that,” the sister’s response was, “Please don’t talk about that.” An older sister would not hesitate to discipline her younger brother, especially from talking about other people or what they had. Small children were told not to talk about that, and not to boast or show off. They were taught to be very kind and very considerate. If an older sister saw her brothers acting badly she would immediately tell them to stop. We would encourage them to be nice to each other. In the old days, whether they were boys or girls, children were taught to treat each other nicely and very well. They were not separated, they were constantly together.

Did they fight?

Uqsuralik: No, not in those days. They had nothing to quarrel about. There was very little to distract them, except the toys that were made for them. We had no television. It was all just day-to-day activity, sliding, playing with dolls, and imitating adult life.
There was no reason for them to quarrel. When a boy started going out hunting, that was the only time it was hard because you, as a girl, were being left behind. You had to stay behind while the boy went out hunting. Because I am older than my brothers, I used to go out hunting with my father. But when they grew older I was left behind. Because you were the one who had been taken before, you became envious that they were being taken out. A brother and sister always hunted together when they went rabbit hunting, especially after it snowed. It used to be so much fun because you could really see the tracks.
There were certain parts of a seal that were eaten by women. Were there certain sections that were eaten by children?

Uqsuralik: The ribs were set aside for children. If a child came along to a feast without his mother he or she just waited in the porch. He didn’t really show himself, except for his arm. The child was given meat from the boneless stomach area or the ribs. Some children would end up with two pieces because they would reach with one hand and then the other. The children would leave after they received a piece of meat. In the Kinngait area, the woman’s sections were the shoulders, the front rib cage, the heart and the lower backbone. These were set aside for women. The longer ribs were set aside for children. Anyone could eat the liver. I remember when I was a small girl we used to go through times of hunger. I remember that when people gathered to feast there were always lots of people in the iglu. Little boys always had toy whips. There was one small boy who went on top of the iglu and lowered his whip down the qingaq, the ventilation hole, and someone tied some meat to the end of it. That was how the boy got some meat. Because there were so many people there was no room for him in the iglu, so that’s what he did. There were so many people. Some children and women were on the bed, having removed their kamiik.

Sometimes we would be invited over for boiled meat. One piece of meat would be passed around from person to person. The first person to take the meat was told by the others to cut off a piece and then to pass it. It was passed around following the path of the sun. Sometimes you thought, “I hope by the time it reaches me, I get the bone, so I can kikkaq, pull the remnants of the meat from the bone.” You had to keep passing it around as long as there was meat. The pot with the broth was also passed around. That way everybody got to have some. The children ate separately. The meat was already cut up for them, so they could have some too.

Whenever people gathered at one iglu to eat, the iglu and the porch filled up quickly. When children were handed a piece of meat, they were told to watch out for the dogs. Of course the dogs would be hungry, so children who were having meat were told, “Don’t let the dogs bite you.” They were told not to leave the meat hanging from their hands because the dogs would automatically think they were being fed. The dogs would go for the meat if you let it hang from your hand.

Did you only pass meat around like that if it was seal meat?
Uqsuralik: Yes. It was only when eating seal meat that this was practised. Sometimes we would run out of seal blubber, so we would give some to people who had run out. There would be just enough through sharing.

We used to go out early in the morning. Of course, in those days we had no phones. The elders used to tap when they wanted you to come. That's what it meant when there was tapping inside an iglu. If you heard it, you had to go inside. We would go in and find that their qulliq had gone out during the night and the iglu was dark. They would ask us to go and get some fire for them. We would use arctic cotton for wicks. We would go get that and we would be asked to go get some fire. We would have to keep it from blowing out. Innisijuq means fetching a light. We would bring it in and light their qulliq. It used to be lots of fun being asked to fetch fire. Once it was lit, it was so beautiful. If it blew out while you were getting it you would have to ask for another light, which was a bit scary. It used to be lots of fun.

When you fed someone's children, did the children always have to tell their parents about this?

Naqi: Yes, because we as parents always wanted to know if our children were fed by another person. We wouldn't know if they had eaten if they didn't tell us. Also that way we could thank the other family for feeding our child. If you have a child at your house, you invite them to partake of everything, even if they are adopted. If an adopted child is given less he learns to be sneaky. If he feels like he is not being watched, he will steal a bit of food. That type of child is noticeable. You should treat all your children equally. You should not watch your adopted children to see if they are different from your other children.

What did women do when they adopted the baby out and their breasts were full of milk?

Naqi: Even an adult can suck the milk out of the breast. Women were happy when an adult sucked on the breast to take the milk out. Everybody understood that the woman was in pain, so, to relieve her pain, they sucked out the milk and spit it out. The adoptive parents did not bring the baby to the mother because she might develop a bond with the baby. What you did was squeeze your breast into a little container, and you put the milk in the container so the baby could have it. We used to do it that sometimes. We did not breastfeed the child from the breast if the child was adopted out. The breasts return to normal a lot faster if you just leave them alone, but if they are too full, lumps can form and an adult can help you suck the milk out so it won't be as painful.

All my children were breastfed except my adopted child. When my adopted child reached one year of age I stopped bottlefeeding right away. He never returned to the
bottle. You should not bottlefeed babies too long. It does something to the ears and babies can get ear infections. Children who have given up breastfeeding or bottlefeeding at a young age have much better ears. I always held my children all the time when I was feeding them, but today babies are being bottlefed on the bed.

Nowadays because we are not breastfeeding we get hard lumps in our breasts after giving birth. The doctors treat this intravenously.

How was this treated before?

Uqsuralik: We would wet a cloth in hot water and put it on the breast. Once you did that, it softened and drained out.

We were told to put the baby on top of us. We would never put our breast down to the baby but had the baby on top of us. If you fell asleep your breast would be away from the baby when the baby was on top of you. You never breastfed the baby while the baby was lying on the bed. This was the advice of our grandmothers and mothers. Sleep can be very deep. Once we fell asleep we could smother the baby and we would never know.

With skin clothing, even though the child might become very warm it would not suffocate. There is more chance of this happening with clothing made from fabric.

When babies were sick how did people treat them?

Naqi: Saraliqtuq was when the baby’s skin was sweaty and the baby seemed like it wanted to go to sleep. Those were indicators that the baby was sick. You didn’t take the baby outdoors when the baby was sick. Sometimes you would get something cold and put it on the forehead. That’s how we used to control the temperature. Sometimes we used to find out that the baby was sick just by feeling the heartbeat through the thumb and the wrist. If the heart was beating really fast, that was another way to tell that the baby was not feeling well. We never really took the baby outside, we just stayed home. What we would do is make the baby sleep. We used to watch the baby while it was asleep. Of course we were concerned about the baby. This knowledge was passed on to us before we had our own children. They always used to tell us, “This is what you are going to do in this type of situation.”

There is one thing that I believe. If I had to go somewhere and I couldn’t take the baby and I had no one to leave the baby with, I took a Bible and opened it and placed it under the baby to keep the baby company. If I didn’t do this it would create a problem for the baby. My mother told me to do this. Sometimes we are tempted to do things we know we are not supposed to do.

Women stayed home while the hunters went out hunting. We used to watch them take off on their dogteams. There were just women left. We would cut up young seals
and eat them. One time I was asked to stay and eat and I totally forgot that I had left my baby behind in the qammaq. This was the child that had already been named after my mother. When I got back to the qammaq the baby was completely white. I flipped her over. She didn’t even move. When I tried to breastfeed her she wouldn’t take my breast. I checked her pulse but I couldn’t feel it. The only heartbeat I could feel was up on the soft part of the baby’s head. My older sister Naullaq, who was named after my mother’s brother, was cutting up seal. I said to her, “Your sister is not doing very well.” She asked me to give her the baby and I did so. She grabbed the ridgepole of the qammaq and started to say the Lord’s Prayer. The baby started breathing and the heartbeat started to get stronger and stronger as the prayer was said. At the end of the prayer the baby had totally recovered. I firmly believe that saying the Lord’s Prayer is really powerful. Sometimes we don’t really believe something until our beliefs are tested. Your beliefs strengthen after an experience like that. I have numerous beliefs.

I was told to take good care of my children and be nice to them because they would be the only ones who would take care of me when the day came that I needed their help. I never thought I wouldn’t be able to do things for myself, but now I need to call my daughters for help. Even though my oldest children had been boys, Ooleepeeka, my daughter, is now the eldest.

Before a child could speak, how did you tell if they were sick?

Uqsuralik: Sometimes it was obvious. In the old days, sickness was not common. If they were limping you had to find out exactly what the cause was. Not always, but on occasion, you saw a child that was limping because of a problem with the hipbone. In the old days sickness was not as common as it is today. Only after the ships came up here did the flu and the common cold start. After the ship left it would be a whole year before anybody else got a cold again. In the old days we were very healthy. Some people had problems with ankle or knee joints but, other than that, we weren’t sick very often.

After a newborn had caught a cold or the flu once, did they become prone to catching a cold or flu again?

Uqsuralik: These days newborns are more prone to catching the flu. In the old days it was not like that at all. The flu is a new thing up north. When I was a small girl I never saw or heard about the flu. It was only when the ships started coming up here that we got the flu. Every time the ship came in the whole camp would be stricken with the flu and when the ship left, then no one would be sick until the ship came back. The flu only came when the ship came in. Today we are prone to flus almost every day because in the settlements people are intermingling a lot more than they used to. There is a wave
of flu that goes around. In the old days you never saw a really bad flu. We used to have tuberculosis. We also had skin diseases. They would be passed around and they were contagious.

**Did newborns in the past become jaundiced?**

**Uqsuralik:** We never saw that in the old days. These days you see that more often. I think it has to do with the pills that the mother takes before the baby comes out. That’s why they have yellow skin. It’s nothing to be worried about. The skin just turns yellowish. We never saw that in the old days.

        When the baby gets older you don’t want to sleep with a young child that is on the chubby side because if their face is right up against you they can suffocate. We were asked not to sleep with a chubby child because there is a fear of suffocation. The term for a baby suffocating while sleeping is *ijjia.*

**Did people back then get measles?**

**Uqsuralik:** I don’t recall anyone having measles. *Paqtig* is when the skin flares up in spots. *Paqtigtuq* is the word to describe this. I don’t know about measles. I’m not sure if what I call *paqtigtuq* and what you call *aupallaajuq* are the same.

**How is paqtig treated?**

**Uqsuralik:** With *paqtig* we would bandage the skin with bearded seal blubber if it was really bad. That’s what we used for the worst cases. Bearded seal blubber was the best to treat that. What you would do is scrape the fat off and use what was left of the blubber as a bandage. That was for the really bad cases. In those days sickness was not common. Everyone was quite healthy. When we had a headache we used to tie a band around the head and put pressure on the head. This band was called a *niaquut.*

**Did people get headaches from too much blood pressure in the head?**

**Uqsuralik:** I think so. You have headaches when you have too much pressure in your head.

**Did healthy individuals ever get really sick?**

**Uqsuralik:** Yes. Once people who are rarely sick get sick they usually die. People that are stricken with sickness on a more regular basis live longer. That’s part of our knowledge. Some people are rarely sick and some people are always sick. If a person has
a fever and you can feel it on the outer skin, it is better than if the fever is inside. Then it is more dangerous. You know if a person is going to die because the skin cannot warm up; it is cold.

When children were kipiniaqtuq, depressed or under stress, how did you get them back to normal?

Uqsuralik: Kipiniaqtuq means mourning for someone. If a small child has lost their mother or father and they are mourning for their parent who is deceased, their growth seems to be stunted, both physically and mentally. That’s because they are mourning for their father or mother. Children that are kipinikuit take a longer time to develop into adults. If you treat them nicely and raise them properly they start to grow normally again.

Naqi: When a child has lost someone you shouldn’t let them use another child as a substitute. You shouldn’t let them spend too much time with one child because it becomes difficult to separate them from the child they have become attached to.

Can children help uplift an elder who is severely depressed?

If you are trying to uplift someone from severe depression, kipiniaqtuq, what should you do?

Naqi: If the person is severely depressed about a relative that is deceased and there is a child that has that relative’s name, the elder will automatically treat the young child as if it were that person. That’s why if your child is named after someone who has died it is very important to go see that person’s relative. When you take that child who is named after a deceased person to see the relative it will uplift them enormously.

If a person was mourning a friend or a relative, what did people do for them?

Naqi: Sometimes their appetite would disappear. Even a small amount of food would fill them up. This would happen because they were mourning someone.

What do you do when children don’t want to eat?

Naqi: If you tell them that if they don’t eat they will be shorter than other people, they will eat. Of course they don’t want to be short, so as soon as you say that, they start eating. It comes to a point where they will even want to clean the whole bone. While the child is not looking, you take some meat and pierce it with a bone and you say, “Here is what you are going to eat. You are going to strip it clean right down to the bone.” They
always stay there and finish the whole thing, because they think they are eating meat off the bone. Of course it all has to do with their wanting to be taller, so they will really eat. Some of them really have big appetites when you say that to them.

Sometimes children go outside without finishing their tea and bannock because they can hear the other children playing outside. Sometimes it seems like they can’t wait to go outside. One of my children, Mary, would always say she was full when she could hear the children playing outside. She would come back in and I would say, “What are you doing back inside already? Are you cold?” “No,” she would answer, “I am coming back to finish my tea.” I would say, “But you have your caribou parka on!”, and she would say, “I saved it for later.” And that’s what we would do in the old days, we would save it for later. She was taught like that and she believed that.

My older sister, Naullaq used to tell her that if she gossiped her tongue would be cut out by a qallunaq. My older sister used to say that to her and she really believed it, so she didn’t gossip, even when something was done to her.

**Uqsuralik:** Some children did not want to eat that much. You gave them small portions, as you knew they were not going to finish the meal anyway. They would grow out of it. They would get into the spirit again and start eating more, but you shouldn’t force them. It’s preferable to give a small child a small plate. When they don’t want to eat much, then you give them very little so there isn’t much waste. Sometimes when you try to force them it doesn’t help. If you want them to eat properly, especially your grandchildren, you should give them small portions when they don’t want to eat, so that you know they are going to finish it, especially when they are at that age when they don’t want to eat much. When they start growing older their appetite starts coming back so you have to adjust the portions accordingly. I have lots of children myself, and lots of grandchildren. They all have different eating habits. Some eat lots, some don’t. But I don’t force them. I just give them the portion that they want. Sometimes you are happy with the portion that they want, sometimes you aren’t. But give them an appropriate portion. Don’t say, “Eat the whole thing.” They will go through a stage for a while where they don’t want to eat, and then they will go through another stage where they will eat and eat and eat. Some children don’t want to eat that much at each stage and some of them do. That’s how it’s always been. Children will go through a stage where they don’t want to eat very much and then go through another stage where they just want to gobble everything down. Sometimes children get sick of eating the same food and that’s when they lose their appetite. When they are presented with food that they don’t eat all the time then they get their appetite back.

*Do some children lose their appetite when they know they are going to get a younger sibling?*
Uqsuralik: I don’t know. I never saw that with my own children when they were going to get a younger brother or sister.

What about after the baby arrives?

Uqsuralik: No, maybe because they are happy they have a little brother or sister in front of them. They feel joy at having a new family member, but we know it is not going to be that way for long.

Are babies today different from babies in the old days? I have heard in the old days the muscle development of newborns was a lot slower than it is today.

Uqsuralik: Yes, today the baby’s muscles seem to develop more quickly. In the old days it seemed to take a lot longer. These days the baby’s neck muscles and other major muscles in the body develop much faster than in the old days. Some of them start smiling early on. Nowadays babies even seem to be aware of what’s around them.

So they stayed babies for a longer period of time in the old days.

Uqsuralik: Yes, they used to be babies for a longer time in the old days. We never encouraged walking because we didn’t want the baby to be bowlegged. If you tried to make the baby walk too early, the baby would become bowlegged, ajaluttaq. They also told us not to make babies walk too early because they would have short legs if you did.

Naqi: They used to tell us to let nature take its course. We didn’t try and teach the baby to walk. We let the baby develop naturally.

Uqsuralik: Even when you start seeing them grabbing onto things and standing up, you shouldn’t try to make them start walking.

Naqi: You shouldn’t even teach them to crawl.

Uqsuralik: I myself used to be shy because I was kakivvingajuq, knock-kneed. My knees used to get sore.

Naqi: My grandmother used to sing a song about a bowlegged whaler, but the whaler didn’t understand her words.

Uqsuralik: Could you sing it for us?
Naqi:

Aqutivut, aqutivut kakivviungajuq,
Our helmsman is bowlegged,

Hili, hili, hili
Kapitaivut, kapitaivut iggiakittuq,
Our captain, our captain has a small throat,

Hili, hili, hili
Kapitaivut, kapitaivut iggiakittuq.
Our captain, our captain has a small throat.

Uqsuralik: Was that because he didn’t eat?

Naqi: Because he only ate small pieces. They thought his food would get stuck in his throat if he ate bigger pieces.
Was it the woman, her husband, or her in-laws that decided if a baby was going to be adopted out?

**Uqsuralik:** A couple who wanted to adopt a baby could approach the parents and the parents would say either yes or no. Sometimes a couple would ask for a baby and sometimes they would be asked if they wanted to adopt a baby. If a pregnant woman didn’t want to keep the baby she would give it up for adoption.

Of course the mother has a strong natural love for the baby. One of the things we know is that when the child is going to be adopted, the mother should have very little physical contact with the baby. The baby has to be taken away right away. Sometimes, newborns get taken away as soon as they are born. If you were the one who was going to be adopting you would wonder about who was going to take the baby away for you. I was helping this woman deliver and I was going to adopt the baby. You’re thinking that you hope nobody takes the baby away from you or changes their mind. When a baby is going to be adopted, the mother has strong unconditional love right away. It is very difficult to take a baby away from a mother for adoption. It is a lot easier when the mother says, “I don’t want to keep this baby, do you want to have it?” You tend to show more love to adopted children than to your own children. I don’t know why.

**Naqi:** Also, if I were to adopt a baby I would give something in return to the people I was adopting the baby from. It is kind of like a payment.

**Uqsuralik:** It is kind of like a payment because you want the baby to have a good life.

**Naqi:** You don’t use the word for payment, akili, you use the word ikauti.

Have you ever seen a situation where the baby is returned to the mother?

**Uqsuralik:** Yes. I have heard of some mothers taking the baby back. There was one baby that was adopted out and the next day the mother took the baby back.

When they wanted the baby back, would the baby be fought over?

**Uqsuralik:** I guess so, but I have never heard anything about this. There was a family that adopted a baby and the next day the mother went to take the baby back. I guess it was hard on both families, especially on the one that lost the baby. It must have been hard on them.
Today they don’t let older people adopt very much because they worry about what will happen to the child if they died. In the past were older people allowed to adopt?

Uqsuralik: In the old days, adoption was always part of our lives. There would be couples that were incapable of having their own children. In the old days, there weren’t that many children. Today there are a lot more children than there used to be. One of the best ways to have a child in the old days was through adoption. They would feed the baby mouth-to-mouth with seal broth because in those days we had no bottles. My father, who was adopted, was fed like that. Our ancestors were very clever in finding a way to feed an adopted child. We called pacifiers uviuraq. We used walrus blubber as uviuraq.

Should adopted children be informed about who their biological parents are? Should they be told why they were adopted? I have known adults who have been told they were adopted who are still hurt over this.

Naqi: It is true that you should let the child know that they are adopted and who their biological parents are. I’ve gone through that myself. My niece Malaya Nakasuk had four biological children. Her only son passed away. Two of her daughters were pregnant at the same time, Hannah and Atsainaq. Malaya’s husband decided that one of the babies should be adopted out. I know myself I can be unwise at times. My niece’s daughter was in labour and we were at her home. When the baby came out it was a girl. My daughter, Leetia, didn’t have a younger sibling and she always asked me if she was ever going to get a younger brother or sister. She said to me, “Why don’t you take the baby, mother? Adopt her.” I said, “We’ll adopt the baby.” This child was going to be mine. We had already arranged it. My daughter was firmly believing that it was going to be her younger sister. Then I said to my niece, “Maybe I won’t be able to take care of a baby,” so my niece decided to adopt her granddaughter instead. I have never forgotten that experience. The doctors told us that the baby was a girl. My niece asked if I was going to adopt the baby and I said, “No, I changed my mind.”

Later I decided I wanted to adopt the baby of my niece’s other pregnant daughter. I was the first one to offer to adopt it. I wasn’t present when the baby was born. The mother called me and said it had a penis. As you can see, I still have that child today. He is a big boy and I have always depended on him. I have always defended him. I have immense love for him. When he was a teenager, and someone asked for Mo on the telephone, I would always say, “We don’t have a dog here, only dogs say Mo. Why do you always ask for Mo. His name is Mosesie. It only has three syllables.”
Did some women adopt babies so that their daughters could learn how to take care of a baby?

Uqsuralik: I have never heard of that. The only thing I have heard about was a mother adopting to help take her mind off mourning or sadness.

Did young girls take care of babies so they could learn more about them?
Naqi: Yes.

I had a dream where my husband’s grandfather wanted my adopted son to be named after him. By this time he was old enough to sit up. What did this dream mean?

Naqi: It definitely had a meaning. From what I know, a child of two or three years of age is still young enough to be given a name. In one case here, a man wanted to name his grandchild, who was a toddler, after someone, and that’s what the parents did. It was an older man who actually initiated the process of giving the toddler a new name. He wanted to name the toddler after one of his cousins. He used to call me Illuarjukuluk, cousin, because I was named after his cousin. When he acquired anything that one would be proud of, such as a rifle, he would show it off to me and to his grandchild because we were named after his cousin. I used to go to visit him. I also have the same name as his daughter, Aggaarjuk. Once I brought my two-gallon jerry can to the Hudson Bay Company in Apex to buy kerosene. We used to put things on our backs and carry them. I was walking around Apex waiting for the store to open so I could get some kerosene with the two-gallon jerry can. I put the container down, and it totally disappeared. I looked everywhere but I couldn’t find it. I asked this little child who had been given a new name, “Did you notice a container over here? Did some other children take it?” He kept saying, “I don’t know.” “Oh let’s just forget it,” I said. “It’s just gone. I’ll buy another container and get the kerosene. If we find the other can my niece have it. My niece and her grandfather will have a new can.” After we had forgotten about the container it appeared again. Probably that little child hid it. I didn’t get angry about it because he was a two-year-old. Instead of getting angry, I praised him because that container used to be his through the person he was named after. I thought he just took it back. And that’s why I firmly believe that acquiring a name helps you carry on the person you were named after.

Uqsuralik: Was the child named after the man that used to own the container?

Naqi: Yes. I used to have some of his gear, not all of it, but I did take possession of some of his things. There were some things that used to be his father’s. He used to live in
Apex. My niece Annie used to work over there. I have never forgotten what he used to say. He always said, “Look at me, I can no longer do anything, maybe I should stay inside.” I made some clothes for him. Shortly afterwards he passed away.

If a child who wanted a name wasn’t given that name what would happen to the child?

Uqsuralik: I don’t know what would happen to them.

Naqi: I have never heard of anything like that. When we give a name to the best of our knowledge we are naming the child after the person they were supposed to be named after.

Should I have named my adopted son after my husband’s grandfather even though my other son already had the name?

Naqi: Yes, you should have. Sometimes parents would wonder if their child wanted a name, especially when the child was manittuq, breathing with convulsive heavings as though they had been crying heavily. Sillusimajuq is a word for feeling hurt, in this case because they were not given a name. Sometimes they would wake up sounding as though they had been crying for a long time.

It seems like orphans are ignored these days. How were orphans treated in the past?

Naqi: You have to treat them with care. You have to counsel them well because they either have no mother or no father. We should treat them as we were treated. We need to show them how to lead a good life.

There was one question I wanted to respond to. If a girl is named after a man, she is allowed to carry on his traits for a while. I heard that if a girl was named after a man, that man would be with her even though she was a girl. My mother knew that the first two children named after her would be boys, even though the later ones would be girls. I have been told about one of these two men, who now lives in Panniqtuuq. While he was building his house everyone was thinking of my mother. When they came to inspect the house, the inspectors were really impressed and said they didn’t know how to evaluate that house. They were told that it was so well-made because this man was named after a woman who wanted a nice house.

The other man named after my mother was baptized as Mosesie. When he was asked what his name was he would reply, “Mosesigasuk arnaq Mosesie, but really Arnaq.” Ever since then he’s been called Mosesikuluk, sweet Mosesie.
There was also a person who was named after a person who had drowned, whose body was never found. Whenever he was taken to the shore he would hyperventilate. This child became a teenager without ever having had a bath. It was because he was named after someone who had drowned that he was like this.

*Do you have to keep an orphan occupied, for example, teach them to sew so they won’t miss their parents too much?*

**Naqi:** Yes. If they just sit still, their stress just grows. What we have to do is distract their minds away from it.

*Even though a young orphan girl didn’t want to learn something, did you persist in teaching her?*

**Naqi:** Yes. You had to persist in teaching a young girl. In the old days we were asked to make small things. We used to put pieces of fur together. We were shown the direction of the fur and why this was important. That was the way we were taught to sew skins. You would sew a particular strip this way and a particular strip that way.

*How did they deal with boys who had become orphaned?*

**Naqi:** They also taught them. The men taught them all about snow, all about wood, and how they could survive if they couldn’t make an iglu with a top. They used to teach them all about imusuit. They would be told to shovel snow towards the qamamaq. You always gave them chores. When they started going out hunting, they would have a little gaff, and a little harpoon. They would take all their tools with them, especially during seal pup season. They would take that little gaff for hooking the seal pups. They used to have a little whip and they used to play on the pressure ice. They used to pretend seal flippers were seals. They could put a string through them and pretend to harpoon them. They were teaching them, of course, to survive outdoors.

*In the old days were orphans abused?*

**Uqsuralik:** Yes. Some orphans would be abused. We were always told not to mistreat or abuse orphans. You could tell by their eyes if they were scared of you. Some children used to be deliberately mistreated. I myself have heard of this happening. We were asked to treat orphans with kindness. We were told to give them food if you saw they were hungry. Because they didn’t have parents, they were intimidated by others, and couldn’t ask for food. When children knew that a child was being mistreated, they treated the child in the same way. Once children knew that another child was being abused they always grouped together against that child. If the family the child was
living with found out that there was a family helping the child, then the mistreatment
got worse. Orphans are very shy and never ask for anything because they have no
parents. A mother seems to be your shield against the world. We were told not to
mistreat an orphan, for if we did, this mistreatment would come back on us.

*Were people wary of the possibility of orphans paying back people who had mistreated them?*

**Naqi:** Abuse does not have to be physical. It can be mental as well. We have all these
unwritten rules about childrearing. When a child is being mentally abused they have a
high stress level. This gets worse because nobody is there to help them. There is a saying
that a mentally abused child can have all sorts of bad thoughts. We have to worry about
children that have been mentally abused. What you have to do is counsel them. When
you start counselling they cover their ears and don’t listen. You might want to give up.
Of course the child is already full of fear so you have to be very careful. Verbal abuse is
the most hurtful type of abuse. It has the worst effect on people. Young people feel sad,
they feel hurt. Mental abuse can be very damaging.

*Did children copy adults’ behaviour?*

**Uqsuralik:** When children notice that a child is being mistreated by the people they live
with, they too will mistreat the child. Parents are always asked not to mistreat children
because the other children will do the same thing as the abusive parents.

If a mother is mistreating her own children you should not defend her children in
front of them. You should not say anything to a mother who is abusing her children in
front of them. You never confront the mother in front of the children because some of
the children become very inconsiderate and do not listen to their mother.

*When parents are abusive towards each other, is it the same?*

**Uqsuralik:** An abused spouse displays the same symptoms as an abused orphan. You
can tell just by looking in their eyes that they are scared. Because there is spousal abuse
they are not happy with themselves, and their own children are like orphans. Through
their eyes you can see that they are always watchful and that they are unhappy.
Children that have grown up with fear are very watchful. They are aware of everything.
They are always on their guard.

*When children who have been abused become older, do they become aggressive?*
Uqsuralik: Some of them do, even though they always tell themselves that they will never be like their fathers. Sometimes they have this dream, but in real life they pick up the abuse they have seen from their parents. There are some that do really truly commit themselves never to abuse their own spouse. Some children who have grown up with violence think that every family is like that and think that’s the way to live. Others don’t want to do this when they grow up and they make very good husbands.

What happened to parents who were abusing their child?

Uqsuralik: Some of the parents had their children taken away, because the whole camp could see that the child was often very hungry and it was obvious that the child was being mistreated. Sometimes the child would be taken away and placed with another family. There are a few parents who only mistreat one of their children. When our children are young and we treat them properly, they grow up with kindness and they pass that on. When children feel love from their parents they will continue the same thing with their own children and with others. So we have to show them love. We do this so they will not mistreat their own children. When you hear about mistreatment, a simple rumour can grow enormously in a very short period of time. The original story is never the same by the time it goes around the whole camp. That is why we are always told not to gossip or say bad things about other people.

Who took the children that were taken away from their families?

Uqsuralik: They would go to another family. If people were not intimidated by the abusive parents the children were taken away. They would tell the parents in a kind way that they would take the child for a while to provide for him or her. They would do this in this way so that the parents didn’t start hating the child. If people were intimidated, the child was just left there. I have never seen this myself, but I have heard of it happening. I grew up in a camp, not in a large populated settlement. Up to today I have never seen a family abusing their children. I have only heard about it.

Were the parents hurt after their children were taken away?

Uqsuralik: Yes. Siliujuq is feeling hurt by something that was done to us, especially by our husbands. When we hear a lie about ourselves it causes a lot of pain.

Do orphans take revenge when they become adults?

Uqsuralik: Some of them take revenge, not physically, but mentally. Some of the orphans do pay back. It depends on the individual. Some of them don’t even think about taking revenge. Some of them do take revenge mentally on the very people that
abused them. Sometimes they make life difficult for the people that used to abuse them. When they were younger they were fearful and they couldn’t do anything, but when they are older and capable of paying back, they do. Sometimes they treat the abusers the same way they were being treated. We were told not to abuse orphans because someday they would pay us back. The mind can be so powerful. If they wished someone dead, either that person or one of their relatives might die. However, an orphan’s bad thoughts could also bounce back on them.

If you were abusing me, and I had bad thoughts about you, could someone that I really love die?

Uqsuralik: Yes. If you were thinking badly about me as the abuser and I repented my wrongdoing, if you still persisted in having bad thoughts, one of your relatives might have something done to them. This could bounce back on you. This was known through the angakkuit. There are some individuals that are afraid to think about what they feel, as they are hurting so much. When you just keep things to yourself they really grow.

When there is an orphan that still has one parent, that child doesn’t seem to mingle much with other children. Back then were orphans like that also?

Naqi: A lot of elders say an orphan has a different rate of growth, both physically and mentally. He or she could be young but be more mature mentally. That’s how it is.

Do children who only have one parent eventually get over their shyness?

Naqi: Children should not tease each other about the fact that they don’t have a mother or a father. You should always tell children not to tease. You can always tell them we have the same father in heaven. I never referred to my stepfather as my terrible, ugly stepfather. I never said that. It really used to hurt me when other children teased me about the fact he was not my biological father.

If you were helping as a midwife and a woman died as a result of the labour, what would happen to the child?

Uqsuralik: If the woman had relatives, the baby would go to the immediate relatives or to the people that had arranged to adopt it. If the woman didn’t have any immediate family, then a couple that wanted to adopt would take the baby. If no one else wanted the baby then the midwife would take it. Usually the child went to the immediate relatives.
When a woman was in labour and there was something wrong with the baby, was the woman told not to look at it?

**Uqsuralik:** I’ve never heard that you weren’t supposed to look at the baby if it was stillborn. I gave birth once to a stillborn baby. Even if the mother looked at the dead baby, the mother would not die unless it was her time to die.

*When a child was born, could you see if the child was going to be handicapped?*

**Naqi:** When you know a child should be capable of certain motor skill movements and they are not, then you start wondering if there is some form of handicap. For example, you looked at the legs to see if one might be shorter than the other. Then you looked to see if there was an injury.
Children’s Emotions

Is it okay for parents to intimidate their children?

Uqsuralik: You don’t want children to feel intimidated. You feel pity for children you see treated that way.

Naqi: We don’t want our children to be afraid. In the old days, when children came over they would stay right at the doorway. Today when children come over they come right in and find a cup and have tea. They just help themselves. We never used to do that. We would be given a piece of bannock by the person we were visiting, to show us that they didn’t want to intimidate us. We would keep it in our mouths for a long time so we could show it to our mothers when we got home, so they knew we had been given something. When we were given a piece of bannock, we would tell our parents who had given it to us. Unniqsiurniq is when a child or an adult tells someone about something good that has been done for them. We should not let children be intimidated so that when they grow up they won’t intimidate others. Children who are intimidated take revenge when they become adults. To prevent this cycle, you shouldn’t intimidate them. If a child hasn’t seen you for a while, when they finally see you they run up to you and hug you. If a child is clinging on to you it is because you have treated the child very nicely. They long to see you and they are really happy to see you. When we were girls, we used to amaatqaq babies for their mothers. Some babies would cry when they were put in the amauti, because the mothers had pinched them. Some babies would get really attached to the girl that used to amaatqaq them. When they were taken out of the amauti they didn’t want to go to the mother. Even though we said no, they wanted to stay with us. It was wonderful to be given beads as a reward for carrying a baby. Even though an item was very small, when it was given to you it meant a lot. When you got to wear an amauti with beads you felt proud.

What does niviuqtuq mean?

Naqi: Niviuqtuq is when, for example a bird, such as the Lapland Longspur has eggs nearby and tries to distract you by pretending to have an injured wing. The tail is wide open and she expands her wings. As soon as you see that, you know she probably has a nest nearby. She is trying to keep you away from her nest because that is her way of protecting what is dear to her. Niviuqtuq is what she is doing.
How would a woman niviuqtuq her children?

**Uqsuralik:** She would do this by protecting them and making sure no harm came to them.

Is it all right to niviuqtuq your child?

**Uqsuralik:** Children are happy to feel niviuqtuq from their mothers. Some women do this more than others.

You said we shouldn't embarrass our children. You said we should talk to them and make them understand how they are supposed to behave. Could you expand on this?

**Uqsuralik:** They need to be able to feel embarrassment. You shouldn't worry about a child that is easily embarrassed. But a mother shouldn't embarrass her children. This is really intimidating to them.

**Naqi:** If children have not been made to feel embarrassed in the first place they won't feel intimidated. It is very obvious in a child's behaviour. If we don't follow the rules we were given by our parents we suffer for it later.

If a person makes fun of things, nothing happens to him immediately. Something could happen either to his children or to him later in life. We knew that eventually we would be paid back for our wrongdoing. This is what my mother told me would happen if I knowingly did something wrong. Once we did something wrong, we always felt dreadful and sorry for doing it. We always took care of each other because of this. Even if people were not our own relatives we still took care of them. Our mothers always said we had to take care of everyone and look out for each other, even if they were handicapped.

Were you ever made to feel embarrassed when you were a child?

**Naqi:** Yes. When we were young we were told not to repeat what the adults were talking about.

**Uqsuralik:** If we did this the adults would make us feel embarrassed for doing so.

**Naqi:** Sometimes I regret not listening in. I think that's why there is some knowledge that we are unable to pass on. We did listen here and there.

You didn't want people to smile at you too much because it made you very shy. Your words came out funny and you started laughing and giggling. We used to be scared just to drink water.
Uqsuralik: You didn’t just go help yourself. You had to ask first because old women tended to be stingy.

Could children just take food when they wanted to?

Uqsuralik: If they weren’t told they could take something, they didn’t take it. Because we didn’t have refrigerators, food was out in the open. If they weren’t told they could do so, children didn’t take food. If they were told to take something, even though they weren’t hungry, they would eat. As children, we would never take food on our own, even if it was meat. We would never take tea on our own. It is very different now. Whenever children want tea they just take it. They eat whatever they want and we have become accustomed to this.

Naqi: Our grandchildren, and other children who visit us feel very comfortable in our home. They do things together. They wash dishes and sweep the floor. This makes us feel grateful.

When do we start teaching a child about feelings such as fear, anger and shyness?

Uqsuralik: It is only when they become older that they start showing shyness. It is only when they get past the toddler stage that they begin to takurngaqtuq, react to strangeness, when they see someone they don’t know and start crying.

Is this different from aallajuaq?

Uqsuralik: It is the same thing. They start crying when they see someone they are not accustomed to see. They act as though they are scared. If the parents are afraid of something, the child quickly picks up on this. Tulukkiniq is when a child has grown up in an environment of fear. Children will become fearful at a very young age if they grow up in an environment where people shout at each other or show anger towards each other. Even small infants can sense fear. If the father is hitting the mother, even a small baby can sense that.

Do they remember this after they have grown up?

Uqsuralik: Yes. They say they can remember the fear that they felt. I have been told that when a baby’s mother has been hit by the father, the baby is very aware of this. We are told not to expose our children to this type of thing.

Do kangaaqtuq and kaggaqtuq have the same meaning?
Uqsuralik: Yes, they are the same. Even when babies are in the womb they can feel it if the parents are unhappy with each other. A baby who has felt this in the womb is different than a child who hasn’t felt this.

Are some people more prone than others to ningaqtuq, assault their spouses?

Uqsuralik: Children learn this type of behaviour. They think that their father is always going to be like that. When children grow up in an abusive environment, some children tell themselves they don’t want to be like that and they follow through with this when they are adults. They tell themselves that even though their father beat up their mother, they don’t want to be like that because it is scary. There are other children who grow up thinking that this is the way you have to act.

Some children start crying all of a sudden for no apparent reason. They start crying very hard. Is this out of anger?

Uqsuralik: I don’t know why they do it. It is probably not because they are angry. Sometimes when you have the baby on your back you can feel the baby jerking. They say this is a sign that the baby is going to get sick.

Should children know that they are loved?

Uqsuralik: Children should know that they are loved. That’s what every child wants to feel. Every child should know that they are loved.

Can children give love back?

Uqsuralik: If they are raised with love and are not only shown this, but also told this they will learn to love others. If they are severely disciplined, they think that it is normal, and even when they are small children they exhibit aggressive behaviour towards other children. These children do this especially towards other children who have not been treated properly. Children are not all treated the same. It is possible for one child in a family to be mistreated and that child will tend to become a wrongdoer. That’s because this child has not experienced love from the parents. A child that lives with love tends to grow up as a considerate person.

Do children sometimes suffer from nangiarniq, fear of falling or fear of heights?

Uqsuralik: They say that children who grew up in an unhappy family will nangiaq.
When babies start crawling, they start grabbing things. 
How can we stop that? 

Uqsuralik: It's normal for babies to crawl. All you have to do is remember not to leave anything dangerous on the floor. You just have to make sure there is nothing that might harm the baby on the floor. Let the baby grab anything that you do not treasure. Let the baby play. Of course we are happy that the child is developing. But we have to make sure that things that might hurt babies are out of their reach. Don't leave small things on the floor that they could put in their mouths. Don't ever leave hard things around because they will try to swallow them. 

Is it true that you should never surprise or startle pregnant women? 

Uqsuralik: You should not surprise a pregnant woman because you don't want anything to happen to the baby inside the womb. 

If the pregnant woman was surprised, would that baby be quaqsaaqtujuq, easily startled? 

Uqsuralik: Yes it would be. So we have to take care not to startle pregnant women.
Stories, Games and Songs

Were there games strictly for girls and other games that girls and boys played together?

Uqsuralik: Boys could play girls' games too.

Even when they played with inuujait, dolls?

Uqsuralik: It was a lot of fun when boys played inuujait with us.

Naqi: Boys weren’t allowed to play with inuujait or they would go cross-eyed.

Uqsuralik: Some of the boys would try to stop others from becoming involved and tease them. They would tease them and tell them that they were going to be cross-eyed.

Can you talk a bit about najangajaq, playing with the toes of a baby?

Naqi: Our toes are just like our fingers. There are five of them. We recite the names of the toes. The putuguq, the big toe is called kullualuk, then, tikinnguaq, then qitiqtinguaq, then mikilirannguaq, then iqiqqunnguaq. Then you say, “Najangajangajaq, if someone is going to be successful in catching a seal this toe is going to najanga, move.” If the child makes the toe move, you say the seal is going to be so delicious.

Uqsuralik: We used to play other predicting games as well. We would use an assaqquq, a seal humerus, and flip it and say, “If someone is going to catch a seal this is going to land upright.” We would be disappointed if it didn’t land upright but if it did, we thought we would have a nice meal. The elders used to play that game a lot. Once when my husband’s mother came into the qammaq, she started playing with the assaqquq. She said, “If my son is going to catch a seal, it will land upright.” She kept flipping the bone, but it wouldn’t land upright. So she said, “I hope he doesn’t come back.” And we just laughed and laughed.

She was a really old woman and was becoming senile. Sometimes she would stay with her niece and sometimes she would be with her son. She didn’t stay with one family. When she was to move into the qammaq from the tent, we took turns looking after her. I noticed these white things on the table and wondered what they were. They were little bits of paper. It turned out she was chewing the pages of her Bible because she had run out of chewing tobacco. She completely chewed the whole book.

Did you have aqausiit, little songs to show you loved your children?
Uqsuralik: Even though I don’t do it consciously, I still aqaq my own children without even thinking about it because I have so much love for them. Aqausiit have always been part of our lives. They are a way of expressing love.

Do you have a special aqausiq for each child?
Uqsuralik: Yes, I think I have one for each of them. Actually, I don’t have one for Qupirrualik. Even though you don’t try to aqaq it just comes out. My children feel they are too old for this now and are embarrassed by it.

Can you copy the aqausiq of another person?
Uqsuralik: Some do. Some of the aqausiit are beautiful and you just want to hear them. They are a way to express your love. You express your love for a child through the aqausiq. It is not something you do consciously, it is just a way of expressing your love.

Do you also do that to your grandchildren?
Uqsuralik: As I said before, grandchildren are even more lovable than your own children, but they get on your nerves much more quickly. Even though your own children could be bothersome, they never seemed to be. But grandchildren are worse. They are into everything, taking everything. But when the mother is disciplining them, as a grandmother you come to the children’s defence. Grandchildren are very lovable. As soon as someone says “Grandmother,” I respond immediately, even though it’s not my own grandchild.

Can you sing one of your aqausiit?
Uqsuralik: I can’t. My children have to be in front of me for me to do an aqausiq. If they are not here I can’t do it. Sometimes when I aqaq, my children qaqaajuq, respond to the attention. Some of them get shy, some of them get really happy, some of them get really embarrassed. The aqausiq just comes out without me even thinking about it.

Even though the child is not present, when you think about them do you aqaq them in your head?
Uqsuralik: No. When they aren’t there I don’t aqaq them.

Did you play certain games indoors and others outdoors?
Uqsuralik: We used to play everywhere. We used to play with dolls indoors. Naalagiaqtiq was a game we played while we were listening for the dog team. We could
clearly hear dog teams coming back and we used to listen for them. We would take turns listening to see if we could hear the dog teams. One girl would go out first and if she didn’t hear anything, she would re-enter with her head down and say “Qusulaarmanga” three times. Then we would say, “Qusurvuq.” That’s what we would say when the girl came back into the iglu and hadn’t heard the dog team. Then another girl would go out and if she didn’t hear the dog team she would say, “Qusulaarmanga” three times. She would come into the iglu and she would have her head down. Someone would say, “Qusurvuq” and another girl would go out and come back and say “Qusulaarmanga” three times. If a girl could hear the sleds and the dogs very clearly she came in with a big smile. The other children would reply, “Kalirvak,” which was the sound of the catch being pulled behind a qamutiik. We used to have a lot of games in the winter time.

We played a game where we tried to remember and point at everything in the iglu with our eyes closed. We had to name all the sections of the bed, around the qulliq, the window and the entrance. After we had named the different parts of the iglu we would try to go out through the area we pointed at that we thought was the entrance. The person who succeeded in going out was the winner. That’s how we used to play. We were told not to play at the back of the iglu and not to make holes in the walls or the window. We would say:

**ua tavva taanna uat**
Enterance wall, this is the entrance wall.

**aki tavva taanna aki**
Meat storage, this is the meat storage.

**saa tavva taanna saa**
Table, this is the table.

**illiq tavva taanna illiq**
Bed, this is the bed.

**saa tavva taanna saa**
Table, this is the table.

**qulliq tavva taanna qulliq**
Lamp, this is the lamp.

**aki tavva taanna aki**
Meat storage, this is the meat storage.
The window is up there.

The entrance is down there.

After we said this, we would try to go out the entrance.

We were not allowed to make holes on the entrance wall. We used ice for a window.

Ataugaapii is the name of another game where we would make scratches on the window and try to match the scratches to the syllables someone would sing in a song. Some of us used to be really accurate with the little scratches we would make at the window and some of us weren’t. That’s one of the games we used to play inside an iglu. The words of the song were:

ataugaapii
tii taa’u
atauvvaali taa ‘u
niuttuasi
aggattuasi’u
amirujualugaa
una, una

The one who had made scratches that matched the song would win. There were various games inside the iglu that we used to play as little girls. One was playing with dolls. We would ask other girls to come over and play dolls and we would play for hours on end. We would take turns playing in various igluit. We used to play at night. Sometimes we used to play dolls outside in a sheltered area. In the summer, playing with wooden dolls was very popular. Sometimes we had dolls made out of ivory, but most of the time they were wood. We used to play a lot with those dolls. Once we had a little doll dying, and we were mourning and everything was real. My doll was my adopted child. She died and we had a funeral. Afterwards we got scared. We actually got scared over a little doll, especially of the burial site, and we couldn’t even go to that area afterwards. We pretended to bury the little doll. We were so scared we couldn’t go up there anymore. We only played this once. It was silly.

We played all sorts of games outside. We would go far from camp. We would slide on a qisiq, a sealskin pelt. We used to use those to slide on. Someone would wait on the slope and yank the skin from under us. It was a dangerous thing to do. After you yanked the skin, the person would continue tumbling down. We used to have sealskin clothing, which was also very good for sliding on. We used to make a lot of snow fly. It was a dangerous game but nobody got hurt.
We used to play all sorts of games. These days we don’t see them being played anymore. We are even forgetting some of the games. In those days our parents were not too worried about us. Sometimes we didn’t want to eat, even though we were hungry, because we didn’t want to stop playing games. We used to play for hours on end. Even though we didn’t come home for a long time, our parents weren’t too concerned. These days, we are. When we went out walking we would get quite far from camp because we were playing as we went along. When the tide came in on the beach it would flood and then freeze. It would get very slippery. We used to play on that. It was lots of fun trying to struggle to get up after falling. There were all sorts of ways to play back then.

We would play uquutaaq, hide and seek. A person would hide and the rest of us would go around in a circle and sing “Uquutaaq.” When you couldn’t find the person hiding and everybody gave up they would tell the person hiding to uvinngiaq, whistle. After he whistled we would listen. They were asked to keep whistling until we found that person. As soon as we found the person we had to touch them. It was lots of fun.

We used to play tuurngaq. We would pretend to have an iglu, even though there was nothing there. The person who was playing the tuurngaq would make a big circle around the others. Even though there was no iglu, he would pretend to go around the iglu saying, “Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha.” When he got to the entrance he would say, “My child is cold, let me come in.” But he wouldn’t be allowed to enter for a long time. Finally we would let him in. Someone would say, “If you want to eat, please do.” He would pretend to eat as soon as he was offered something. Then he would go out, and then we could hear him or her pretending to throw up. After throwing up he would come back and someone would ask, “Why were you throwing up?” “Because I eat human eyes,” he would say. “I eat human eyes.” He would be told, “There are a lot of eyes at the rear of the iglu.” While he was pretending to eat, we would run away because the tuurngaq would want to eat our eyes. Some of us would be slow in running so we would be caught easily. The tuurngaq would pretend to go after our eyes as soon as it caught us. There were all sorts of games. I think watching these today would be really entertaining.

In the wintertime we used to ask, “Who will make kamik for you?” while stomping our feet at the same time. We would go through all the names of our clothing and we would always answer, “My mother.” We would ask about everything. When we finished asking someone questions, we would ask them to sit on the side. We would tell them to sit down quickly, and someone else would take a turn.

Children used to pretend to go out hunting. They would say, “Pirulujaujucugit, I was bad to you,” and pretend to send one child on his way. When the person was missed, he would return and we would ask him why he went away. There were a bunch of games that were really entertaining.

During the summer months we used to play dolls with rocks and bones. We used to collect rocks and bones. We wore dresses as little girls. They were full of holes from
carrying all those rocks and bones. We used to pretend to have dogs, and of course we always wanted to have the biggest. We would play a game where we would place rocks on end and whoever had the tallest rock would win the game.

We use to pretend to have things. We would crush rocks and pretend that the fragments were sugar. We used white rocks and dark rocks. The dark rock was coffee and the white rock was sugar. We would crumble the white rock. We used to carry rocks on our backs and pretend they were babies. White rock was quite heavy and sometimes it would scrape you on the back of your neck because it was so heavy. Sometimes we would even lose a toe nail when we dropped our rock babies on our feet. We didn’t have real dolls. On occasion we used puppies as dolls. It would be like the real thing because they would pee. It was lots of fun.

We had all sorts of toys. We didn’t have store-bought dolls or toys. We played with everything. Old-fashioned ammunition cartridges and matchboxes were treasures. They were the only things we could really play with. In the old days there used to be really nice boxes with little handles to hold the primus stove. They were really nice boxes. They were treasures. You don’t see these anymore. We used to have lots of ways to amuse ourselves.

Sometimes we would see who could get up the earliest. We never used to have pajamas. We would get up early in the morning and amuniaqtaq, pull our friends who were stark naked out of their beds. Even though we played this game, the parents were not bothered at all. We would come in and wake up our friend and the parents didn’t say anything. Actually they were happy. We would pull him or her right onto the floor of the iglu. This would be early in the morning when it was dark outside. Sometimes the other child started crying. We had all sorts of games.

We used to play catch. Sometimes we would play baseball, but differently than today. We had our own style of playing baseball. It used to be lots of fun. Sometimes the adults would join in children’s games. Your children and our children don’t know how, but back home they are starting to play these games again. They are starting to revive them. In the old days we played lots of games and competed against each other.

How did you play aqsaq, kickball?

Uqsalik: We used to have our own little ball that we had made. We used to split into two teams. You would try and get your opponents on your side by hitting them. We used a ball made of fabric sewn together, not a real ball. You would say “Miluqtippuq, he or she has been hit,” if the person was hit with the ball. While playing ball, we would try to get our opponents over on our side. Some of them were very good, especially the swift ones. Of course we were trying to win. If you were watching I think you would have found it very entertaining. Last summer, the elders came to Kinngait and played
the games we used to play and it was very entertaining. Back then it wasn’t very funny, but when you watched the elders it was hilarious. We played seriously, but we were slow. Of course we were elders and we were playing baseball. This was last summer when the elders came to help bring back those old games. The youngsters were watching while we were playing these games in Kinngait. Of course we are slow now. We are very slow. We are not swift.

Is it true that you weren’t supposed to tickle babies when they were very young?

Uqsuralik: When babies were young you were not supposed to tickle them.

Naqi: If they started grabbing things they were not supposed to, you just placed a little piece of fur by the item that they wanted to take because they would be startled by the fur when they touched it.

Why were people not supposed to tickle small babies?

Naqi: Because babies get tired easily. Their muscles are not developed enough to laugh for a long period of time.

Do people that are tickled a lot become lazy?

Uqsuralik: Yes, I have heard that if people get tickled a lot they get lazy.

Naqi: Maybe they didn’t want children to feel squeamish when they were tickled. There was a story about this that began: “Aanaangilaak unikkaaqtualaurit, Grandmother please tell a story.” The grandmother doesn’t really want to tell a story so she says, “Put the blankets over you and try to get some sleep.” But the grandchild persists and so the grandmother tells the grandchild about a creepy crawly hairless lemming and tickles her grandchild pretending to be a lemming. Then she strokes the child’s back very lightly to help the child go to sleep. The grandmother would chant:

unikkaat, unikkaalaaq
Story, little story

ikani qariaraapimmi
Over there at the qarjaq [guest bed platform in a qammaq]

avinnagaarjuk miqquqannittuarjuk, tuu, tu, tu, tu, tu, tu.
A little lemming with no fur, tuu, tu, tu, tu, tu, tu.

We used to be silly. Aaqsiq was the name of a game where we would try to keep a straight face while trying to make others laugh. We would think of some old man. We
would say that whoever laughed first would become the wife of that old man. Some of us turned red because we were trying so hard to hold in our laughter. That was one of the games we played to entertain ourselves.

Are unikkaaqtuat, the old stories, beneficial to children?

Uqsuralik: The unikkaaqtuat are beneficial to children. At one time these stories were true, but because they are so old they just became stories. They are very useful for children. There are all sorts of stories that can be told to children. Most times, children start settling down when you tell a story. Most of the stories that we heard were true and they have a definite benefit for children.

Do you remember having stories told to you?

Uqsuralik: Yes. My aana, my father’s mother, used to tell stories a lot. I don’t remember most of them, but she did tell stories a lot. Once in a while I recognize the stories I heard as a child.

When would you be told stories?

Uqsuralik: At bedtime. That would be the best time for us to concentrate. That’s the time we paid attention. Some of us would fall asleep before the story was over because we had had a good dose of fresh air all day. We wanted to continue listening but before we knew it we would fall asleep.

Did you ever hear stories about qalupaliit?

Uqsuralik: We never saw them. We have only heard about them.

Why was this story told to children?

Naqi: Because these beings exist. I have been told stories about qalupaliit, and I think they are true.

Uqsuralik: You can hear them.

Naqi: I can tell you a story that I have heard about qalupaliit. They must surely exist. They can enter dwellings.

Uqsuralik: The qalupaliit make a sound. Qatimaajuq is the sound that they make. When my brother and I were out hunting, we heard the sound that one made. The qalupalik was making that noise. It was following us underneath the ice. When we finally reached the land we started running and we couldn’t hear it anymore.
Naqi: They say they have feathers like a mitiq, a duck. They have feathers like a duck, these qalupaliit. This is not a story. This is probably true. Sullitit are things that are said that are true.

Uqsuralik: The qalupalik that was following us followed a long way along the tide line. They stay along the tide line.

Naqi: They make a hollow sound.

Uqsuralik: It must have been quite big to be making such a loud sound under the ice.

Was it wearing an amauti?

Uqsuralik: There is one type of qalupalit that wears an amauti and another type that doesn’t. Some people see them and some people don’t.

Naqi: I heard a story before about a small child that was taken by a qalupalik. He was a small boy who wasn’t even crawling yet. The parents left him for a short time with a blind woman. The woman who was babysitting the child shouted for the mother to come back because the baby was crying constantly. She thought the baby needed to be nursed by his mother. The baby stopped crying when there was the sound of someone coming through the door. She could hear a voice in front of her. “Let me put the boy on my back,” the voice said. She realized it was a deep voice and she became suspicious, but she proceeded to put the baby in the amauti. As she felt the amauti she realized it was not a normal amauti. As she put the baby in, it seemed like the baby just dropped deep inside, and the blind woman said, “What was that I just put the baby in, because the pouch is so deep?” That’s when the baby was taken down to the ocean. The baby was there for several years. Many years later, during the summer time, at low tide on a little rock on the tidal flats, they saw the little boy. He was playing with seaweed and using it as a whip. He saw two people from afar while he was down at the tidal flats. Of course the boy had grown up in water, so he asked the other qalupalik, “What are those, the ones with the fur?” The qalupalik then tricked the boy into thinking it was a mirage when actually it was people he was looking at. The qalupalik said one was a sea gull and the other was a duck.

The little boy had no clothing. He was wriggling his toes and the qalupalik asked him, “What is it that your toes want to do?” The little boy replied, “They want to go to you.” “I am going to catch up to you, I am going to catch up with you,” and then he jumped into the water like a harp seal. So the qalupalik kept the little boy. We know the pouch where they put the babies is very deep.

Uqsuralik: Even though we are from different regions and there are small variations, the story is also very similar.

Stories, Games and Songs
Naqi: My husband had a close-up view of a qalupalik. If you suspected it was a qalupalik you were supposed to say the name of an animal before you aimed at the thing. When you were ready, you said “ugjuk,” bearded seal, and it would become an ugjuk.

Uqsuralik: The word for making a qalupalik into an animal is pirluqtuq.

I would like to hear more stories.

Naqi: There was a part of the story I didn’t finish. If a man was suspicious that it was not an animal, just before he shot it he shouted that he wanted it to be a bearded seal or a ring seal. He would shout the name of an animal just before he shot it. The animal my husband and his companions shot sank, so they used a three-pronged hook called a kivijurniuti to drag it up. It was very heavy. Wherever they hooked it, the skin would just tear because it was very soft. They towed it back onto the land and cut it up after they beached it. It had a round head. It wasn’t like anything they had seen before. The head was almost perfectly round. They started opening it up and inspecting and investigating it. The insides were those of a seal, but it had a whole duck in its stomach. They were amazed about that. They never took the meat. They kept the skin to keep as evidence. They were not very far from our camp. Laipa Pitsiulak, who lives in an outpost camp, was the one who caught the qalupalik. They used the skin that they took off as evidence to show other people. It had a perfectly round head, unlike that of any animal. This is not an old story, it’s quite new.

When you were children were you afraid of lemmings?

Naqi: Lemmings used to stare at you and show their teeth. When we were going after lemmings, I didn’t want to step on them because I was squeamish about touching them. Some of the lemmings are really fierce, and when the snow is melting they come out. I would get a long stick and put a needle at the end. As soon as a lemming ran by I would poke it.

Uqsuralik: Why would you do that?

Naqi: I used to try and get lots of lemmings, especially in the days when we played with inuujait. My mother used to make clothing for my dolls for me. I would take the lemming home after, with it still hanging on the stick.

Uqsuralik: I never used lemming skins at all because I was squeamish about them.

Have you ever heard about animals taking on human form?

Uqsuralik: They said even inugarulliit could take on human form. Everything was able to take on a human form.
Naqi: I have heard that a whole family of inugarulliit could obtain clothing from just one fox ear. There were two upright rocks side by side that were considered to be the home of an inugarulliit family. In the days when they used to paddle boats, every time they passed these rocks there was a song that they had to sing:

Inugarulliakka atuaqput angattuaqput tauva tikuqtuinnaqtuit kitilingigut atuaqput angattuaqput siuttaanggi katatxaanggi qiittut

My inugarulliit would come over, their heads are bowed there they are just pointing. Far from the shore they would come over, their heads are bowed, they are hard of hearing, they are frozen.

How tall are these inugarulliit?

Naqi: They say they are tiny. I think that for their height, they are very swift and very strong. We used to get sea water in the evening. We used to be told that if they chased us and caught us, they would suffocate us with their groin. That’s why I was very squeamish about them. Maybe we were being fooled, but on the other hand, maybe it was true.

Uqsuralik: There is a story about a grandmother and her grandchild who had been left alone. When the inugarulliit arrived at their camp, the inugarulliit were dragging half of a bearded seal carcass. The grandmother and grandchild were without any blubber and had no oil for the lamp. The inugarulliit moved into an empty igluvigaq that was jointed to theirs by a porch. When one of them entered, it said, “Tausunni, it smells like humans.” The other one said, “Tausunni; where is that smell of humans coming from?” The grandmother and the grandchild crawled into bed and pretended to sleep. Because they had no blubber and no lamp it was dark. They were also hungry because they were without food. When the inugarulliit went into the other iglu the old woman used her cane to find the bearded seal. She said to her grandchild, “Move the bearded seal carcass a bit.” She put some of her spit on the tip of her cane and used her spit to stick the carcass to the floor. They could hear the inugarulliit making fun of humans and saying, “Maybe there are humans around. Maybe there are humans sleeping here.”

Later on, even though the inugarulliit were very strong, they were unable to move the bearded seal carcass. They knew there were humans around. No matter how hard they tried, they couldn’t move the carcass. So they ended up just leaving it and as they were going out they said, “Iaq.” This indicated their regret and meant that they weren’t going to pursue the carcass anymore. So the grandmother and grandchild had plenty of blubber and plenty of meat. I don’t know if the family members came back for them or not.
Naqi: Of course when there was no room on the sleds the elders and grandchildren would be left behind. They had to be strong enough to be able to leave a loved one behind.

Uqsuralik: Those who were unable to keep up were left behind because they didn’t have anything for them to ride on.

Naqi: If people were living on an island, they would move to the mainland to get skins for clothing. Those who were unable to keep up were left behind.

**Can you tell us about ijirait?**

Uqsuralik: I have never seen them myself but I have heard stories about them. I have heard that they live in the ground and that they can disappear very quickly. They are very hard to see. There are other beings that some people think might be *ijirait* as well. They appear as people with dog teams, but they don’t leave tracks. You can clearly see the dogs and the *qamutiik* and the people but they don’t leave tracks. People think there are *ijirait* around here but they never see the tracks.

**Were these used to scare children?**

Uqsuralik: No. I was never taught to fear *ijirait*. I was never told to be scared of them. When we were children we were told stories about them, but we weren’t scared of them.

**Are they different from tarriassuit?**

Uqsuralik: They are different from *tarriassuit*. They are not one and the same. I have heard that *tarriassuit* do exist and that, like the *ijirait* they only are visible very briefly.

**Can you talk about the inugarulliit?**

Uqsuralik: Sometimes people have seen their tracks. They are very strong little people. Sometimes you see very old sites where they used to set up their tents. They used huge rocks to hold their tents down. They are very skilled hunters. They are like Inuit. There has been a lot of contact and many sightings of these little people. They could squeeze and suffocate a large man by using their groin. They are very strong. If you run into these little people you shouldn’t do anything to them because you will immediately be defeated because they have immense strength.

**Were the tuniit very small?**

Uqsuralik: They were strong.
Sometimes I wonder if the inugarulliit were the direct descendants of the tuniit because they were both very strong. Were they the same people?

Uqsuralik: They weren’t one and the same. But they say the tuniit were also very strong. Evidence of the inugarulliit is much harder to find than that of the tuniit. The tuniit are a lot more recent. You can see the remains of their dwellings and their tools all over the ground. People often examine old tuniit dwellings. In Salliq tools made of bones have been collected. They are in excellent condition. I think the tuniit moved away recently. We have heard that they were very strong. They used big rocks to make their dwellings. Their harpoon heads made out of stone were beautifully carved, as were their knives. They were very meticulous in making their tools. A lot of material was made out of bone. We don’t know where they went to, but they did flee somewhere. I am pretty sure if we looked for them we would find them. This is one type of being that I’m not afraid of.

Did they use inugarulliit to scare children?

Uqsuralik: No. They weren’t used to frighten us. We were just told they existed. We can see where they used to pitch their tents. Those sites still exist today. They are very old. Inugarulliit were never used to frighten us.

Were the dwellings of the inugarulliit different from those of the tuniit?

Uqsuralik: Tuniit dwellings were much bigger than those of the inugarulliit, especially ones by a lake. There are huge rocks that are placed in the exact location where they built their dwellings. The tuniit dwelling sites are larger than the tent rings left by the inugarulliit. The inugarulliit must have been seen recently because they say they have long beards.

Sometimes small children say they play with little people. Perhaps they are playing with the inugarulliit?

Uqsuralik: Probably that’s true. Myself, I have never seen inugarulliit. I do believe they exist because I have seen their tent rings, though I have never seen any of their artifacts. When you go to one of the tuniit dwellings all you have to do is pick up the sod to find artifacts. They are easy to find and very abundant.

What are the inurujuit, the ones that turn into caribou?

Uqsuralik: Inuruqqajut are animals that are in human form. Inugalaaluit are tuurngait.
Do they take on different forms such as looking like me and then looking like you, and so on?

**Uqsuralik:** Maybe they do, but I don’t know.

**Naqi:** I have heard that animals do take on human form, but I have never seen this personally. At the end of Cumberland Sound, there are a lot of *inuksuit*. We were told not to alter them in any way or the *inua*, the spirit inside, would do something to us. *Kataniqaut* are *inuksuit* shaped in the form of an iglu entrance. There is one made from the hip of a bowhead whale with a stone placed on top of it, as though it was a head with the *inuksuk* in the middle of it. Nowadays there are *inuksuit* that are shaped as though they have arms and legs. We had *inuksuit* that were real *inuksuit*, which were just rocks piled on top of each other. I don’t know why they never toppled over. Some of them are really tall. You can’t even touch the top. We were not to touch them or throw rocks at them.

There were structures called *pullatit*, used for catching foxes. The fox would enter. There would be bait placed inside with a stone on top. When the fox started eating the bait, the stone fell on the fox. That’s how they used to trap foxes in the old days.

What was the use for those that you called real *inuksuit*?

**Naqi:** They were used as guides to keep you on the right path. They also let you know there had been people there before you.

**Uqsuralik:** They also let you know where there were fish. Whenever the fish pool together in the fall, this place is called an *iglu*. When the char gather, the term is *iglisiqtut*. You place a small rock on a larger rock to indicate where this gathering place is. That tells you where the *iglit* are. When we go fishing when the lakes freeze up we look for these. The *inuksuit* were definitely used as guides. They were very, very useful.

**Naqi:** In the old days, you were asked not to touch the *inuksuit*. They were placed by our ancestors as direction markers. You were told not to destroy them. If you did, you would ruin your future. We were not to disturb *inuksuit*, as they were very, very useful. When you are walking and you come across an *inuksuk*, you place a stone on top of it so people know that others have been there before.

Can you tell us more about animals that take on human form?

**Uqsuralik:** Some wildlife would turn into people. Sometimes foxes would turn into people. Even lemmings could turn into human beings for a while, but we don’t know how they did it. It is probably true that they took on human form.
Naqi: When they are in human form they can talk to you. There was a story about a fox who was hunting for food going around and around a lake. A lemming came up and asked the fox, “Are you looking for food around the edge of the lake?” The fox answered the lemming by asking, “Why is your face so round?” All foxes are very conscious that they smell of urine. They are hurt if anyone says they smell a fox. As the fox started walking away, the lemming started to sing:

\[ \text{pamiuqpangauna} \]
That very bushy tail up ahead

\[ \text{ingaqtiarikpuuq, ivaqattiarikpuuq.} \]
has a nice sway.

\[ \text{qiturngaarjuniqai aujuniqai.} \]
Maybe she is looking for decaying food for her children.

\[ \text{niqksaqsiakkami niqksaqsiijaanngilait} \]
She won’t find food for them

\[ \text{quttaarnittarami.} \]
Because she smells of urine.

After singing this the lemming quickly went into its hole.

Uqsuralik: Did this happen because the lemming and the fox were in human form?
Naqi: When they were in human form they spoke like humans. Even lemmings and owls could speak to each other.

Uqsuralik: I wonder why they used to change into human form!

Naqi: The snowy owl’s eyes always stare. They can’t look sideways. They only look straight ahead. To look, they’d always turn their heads right around, and that is because the eyes can’t move left or right. The snowy owl preys on lemmings. They never defecate. They always regurgitate their waste. We used to collect these tiny little lemming bones that were regurgitated by owls. The snowy owl would regurgitate the bones and the fur. We used owl eyes for buckets. When you were playing dolls they made a perfect-sized bucket.

Uqsuralik: The eyes of an owl are very hard.

Naqi: Caribou never look at you. They run with their heads in the air and they don’t even watch where they are going.

Uqsuralik: On the top of the hoof at the cleft there is a yellow part. People say they smell with that and not with their noses.
Naqi: There is a little bone in the hoof. If you poked it, and put thread through it you could make it into a toy called an *imilluttaq*.

Uqsuralik: The joint is made into an *imilluttaq*.

Naqi: The part that is made into the *imilluttaq* is in between the parts of the joint. You can also make an *ajagaq* from the hoof. You could also make an *ijillutaq*, and a *naqiaraqti* as well as an *iluquti*. Those are all toys.

*Can you show us some games? Can you demonstrate them for us?*

Naqi: In one game we would clap both hands on our lap, then clap our hands together once and cross our arms and try to pinch our nose and ear. When this was repeated the second time, you would pinch your nose and ear with the opposite hands. This would be repeated over and over again. This was played as a competition. The first person to make a mistake was out. It is hard to pinch the nose and ear at the same time and someone might pinch the cheek instead. As the game goes on, it increases in speed.

Uqsuralik: In this game you clap both hands on your lap, then clap your hands together once and then clap your hands on your chest, one hand immediately following the other. You would repeat these steps to create a rhythm. At the same time the eyes should be closing and opening repeatedly and the tongue would be moving from side to side or going in and out.

Naqi: We used to play this game in a similar fashion, but we would also sing while we played:

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matuginatali matuginatali
We are not lids we are not lids
matuginak matuginak
Do not be a lid do not be a lid
matuginatali
We are not lids
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tiikkuminatali tiikkuminatali
We don’t make good tea we don’t make good tea
tiikuminak tiikuminak
Don’t be tea don’t be tea
tiikkuminatali
We don’t make good tea
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Uqsuralik: In the face-naming game, we would see who could name and touch the parts of the face (chin, cheeks, and forehead) the fastest without getting mixed up. We would sing:

*tallurutikka, tullirutikka*
My tattoos on my chin, my tattoos on my cheek

*tullirutikka, suluvvautiqutikka*
My tattoos on my cheek, my tattoos on my antler place [forehead]

While we sang we did the following actions. We placed our left fist on our leg. We hit our left fist with our right fist and then with an upward movement hit our chin, then our left cheek, our right cheek and then our forehead. The speed of the game would increase as we played it until someone made a mistake and the other person would win.

Naqi: We used to play all kinds of games. *Naangijaaq* was a game where we tried to race on one foot and see who would be the fastest. We had a *naangijaaq aqausiq* or song, where we would hold a toddler’s hand and while the child was hopping on one foot we would sing to them:

*Naangijaaq llaa talla tallaa taa, naangijaaq llaa talla tallaa tallaa taa.*

We would also play a game where we hopped on two feet. *Quummittaq* was another game we played where we snapped our feet together while jumping in the air. We also played *ilummuttaq* by jumping forwards and backwards with our feet together. We would play these games to see who could do them the longest. In *kaliviqtaq* we would skip with a rope. We would cross over the rope while skipping. We would also bend forward to go lower under the rope while we were skipping to see who could go the lowest.

*Can you katajjaq, throat sing?*

Uqsuralik: I was never able to katajjaq.

*Did you play ajaraaq?*

Uqsuralik: Yes. [Uqsuralik sang this song as she turned a string that was tied to make a loop around one foot while she held the other with her right hand. When she started singing she turned the string to the right to the beat of her song.]
First part:

igimaijaralutsi ajijaqsi tautaqsi
Harpoun without a head

pitikpallugit makkua
Shoot them with a bow and arrow

Pivagakraugaluat
It is possible to get them

Anauttapatsinarlugit
Hit them with a downward blow

Siugattapatsinarlugit
Hit them with an upward blow

Piluuq suvit?
What are you doing, Piluq?

aullaqpit?
Are you leaving?

aullalunnak!
Don’t you dare leave!

mitaututilutit mitaututilutit
Make a fool of yourself, make a fool of yourself.

[Then she put her left index finger on the end of the string and slid the finger down midway and kept it there. She then started the second part of the song as she turned the string to the left in a rhythmic motion.]

Second part:

pisiksima niaqunnguanga
The arrowhead of my bow

iqulaavuq sangullaauvq
Twists and turns

aajajiijaa ajijiijiija
aajajiijaa ajijiijiija

miqattaa miaqataa
miqattaa miaqataa
pautaqattaa qajaqattaa  
Fellow paddlers, fellow kayakers

kinguattiaq kingusiqiak siqiak  
Nice little shrimps, shrimp insides, intestine insides.

[At the end of this song if she pulled her index finger out, and the string was not crossed over, then she did it right. If the string was crossed over at the end of the song, then someone else tried singing and turning the string at the same time. The object of the game was to sing and turn the string, first to the right, then to the left, an equal number of times, so that at the end the string would not be crossed over.]

Naqi, did you play ajaraaq?  
Naqi: Yes, but the song we sang was different.

First part:

pisiksima niaqunnguanga  
The arrowhead of my bow

iqulaavuq sangullaavuq  
Twists and turns

aajajiijaa ajjijijijaa  
aajajiijaa ajjijijijaa

miaqattaa miaqataa  
miaqattaa miaqataa

pautaqattaa qajaqattaa  
Fellow paddlers, fellow kayakers

kinguattiaq kingusiqiak siqiak  
Nice little shrimps, shrimp insides, intestine insides.

Second part:

anarnijaaluksi ajjijajjasi kautaqli  
All your things that smell like feces ajjijajjasi

anattapassinarlugit sigattapaqsinarlugit  
With your hammer hit them with a downward blow hit them with an upward blow
piluuq, suliaqpiit?
Piluq, where are you going?

Aullaalunnak, aullaalunnak
Don’t leave, don’t leave

Mitautigalutit mitatigalutit
Laughing at you laughing at you

[Naqi also sang this shorter version of a song they sang while playing ajaraaq. The same actions apply to this as to the longer version.]

Atigima sinaani niqitaqattanirmat niqi takuu
There had been a piece of meat on the hem of my parka, look at the meat

Sijjaqtiit aissiqput tikinniqput ukkuaqput
Those that live closer to shore came and fetched something, they have arrived, they’ve closed themselves in

Can you tell us what were the most joyous times in your childhood?

Uqsuralik: There were many joyous times in my childhood. I liked playing, especially playing house. I don’t really recall what I liked the most. I enjoyed many different things. I really liked to play house a lot.

Naqi: I liked playing amaruujaq.

Uqsuralik: There were all kinds of games we used to play and all of them were very enjoyable and very entertaining. We used to pretend to have household items. We used to take rocks and pretend that they were a specific item. We would be outside all day when the camp stayed put.

Naqi: When I was out fishing what I caught was not a fish, it was a sculpin. In my younger years I used to love fishing. I never liked smelling sculpin, especially when they were being cooked. You would usually find them under rocks. We would dig by a rock and grab them with our hands. I would get poked by their spikes, but I’d still collect them anyway. The small ones were called qiaqit if they were yellowish and had big stomachs. We used to go after the bigger sculpins with bait and a line. We would try our best but we had to make do. We used to make a hook out of old metal and file it down so it would be sharp. You would tie that hook to a little piece of wood and that’s how we used to catch fish. When we were jigging, we would throw the line and say qaqqag when we were fishing for sculpin. You could see them coming as we lowered the hook. As soon as a sculpin bit, you pulled it up quickly. If they turned away from our bait, we would say, “Qaqqagqaq, I hope it doesn’t give up easily, qaqqagqaq.” [Everyone
made their own fishing sounds.] Even though they couldn't hear us or understand us, we would say this anyway. When you hooked them the hook did not come off, even though they have a large mouth. My mother used to cook sculpins as food.

Footnotes

1 These are nonsense words to give rhythm to the movements in the game.

2 Naangijaaj means “hopping on one foot.” The rest of the words in the song are nonsense syllables to provide rhythm for the song.
Aallajuaqtuq
When a child acts strangely when they see someone they don’t know. Adults can also aallajuaqtuq when they don’t recognize someone or something they see. See also takurngaaqtuq.

Aana
[Kinngait] Father’s mother.

Aanaangilaak
Grandmother, I say.

Aaqsiq
A game in which you would try to keep a straight face while making others laugh.

Aatiiq
Nodding up and down (used in speaking with children only).

Ajagaq
A game played with a rabbit skull, a caribou vertebra or hoof, or a square flipper humerus in which you tried to pop a stick into a hole.

Ajaluttuq
Bowlegged.

Ajaraaq
A game in which string or braided sinew was used to make figures. It is also the name of a game in which shapes are made with the string or sinew while singing a song.

Akili
To pay for something.

Amaaqtuaq
To carry someone else’s baby in the hood of an amauti.

Amaruuaq
A game of chasing called “being like wolves” (similar to British Bulldog) played by people of all ages. Young men liked it because it gave them the excuse to chase the girl they were interested in. Young girls liked it because they got to see who was interested in them. Old women liked it because it gave them the chance to run around. Young children liked it because they got to see who they could outrun.

Amauti
A parka with a pouch and a large hood for carrying babies.

Amuniaqtaq
A game in which children would sneak up on other children and pull them out of bed in the early morning while they were still sleeping.

Angakkuq
A shaman.

Angusiaq
A male child delivered or “made” by a midwife; they then have a kind of godmother/godson relationship.

Annuraaqati
If a person gave a piece of their clothing to a midwife to be given to a newborn at birth, this clothing would be cut and sewn to fit the baby. After that whenever one of them received new clothing they had to give the leftover fabric to each other. From then on these two people would address each other as annuraaqati.

Apaapa
Word for food and eating in baby talk.
**Aqaqtuq**
To express through word or song one’s love for a child.

**Aqausiq**
[singular], *aqusit* [plural] Loving songs or words addressed to children. Each child has its own. Different people may have a different *aqausiq* for the same child. Everyone may pick up a mother’s or grandmother’s *aqausiq* for a particular child. Some *aqusiit* form a person’s identity and get treated as though they were that person’s name, eg: *Arnulaaq* (tiny girl), *Lowie* (“Lovey” stretched out and given an Inuktitut pronunciation), *Banik* (panik, daughter), *Arnaulluaq* (just so rightfully happened to be a girl after three boys). Some *aqusiit* belong to games.

**Aqsaq**
Kickball.

**Aqsaqnim**
The Northern Lights.

**Aqtivaq**
Our helmsman.

**Arnaliaq**
[singular], *arnaliat* [plural] A girl delivered or “made” by a midwife; they then have a kind of godmother/goddaughter relationships.

**Arnaquti**
[Kimngait] The midwife at the birth of a male child.

**Asasiniq**
Giving in to children and doing everything for them.

**Assaqquq**
(Atsaqquq, aksaqquq) The humerus.

**Ataata**
Father.

**Ataatatsaq**
Stepfather.

**Ataatatsiaq**
Maternal grandfather.

**Ataugaap**
A game.

**Atikuq**
To display traits of a person you were named after.

**Atitiiq**
See *avvaq*. Also *sauniapik*, *atitsiaq*.

**Atiqtawusi**
A game.

**Avinngaarjuk**
A little lemming.

**Avvaq, Avvakuluk**
People who share the same name. In a way it is describing that they are two halves of a whole. See also *atikuluapik*, *sauniapik*, *atitsiq*.
Haa, haa
Urinate in baby talk.

Haaqtutit
‘You have peed’, in baby talk.

Iaq
An expression of regret.

Igliq
[singular], igliit [plural] A bed, or bed platform. Also a place where fish pool together in the fall.

Iglisiq
Wood or stones placed at the edge of the bed to stop the bedding from moving.

Iglisiqtut
The gathering of char in the winter in the bottom of the lake.

Iglu
[singular], igluit [plural] Snowhouse, dwelling.

Igluvigaq
[Archaic] An iglu that was no longer occupied. [Present Day] An iglu (snowhouse, dwelling).

Ijillutaq
A toy made from a caribou hoof.

Ijirait
Beings who are not visible to people except in the form of caribou; also called ijaqqat.

Ijjia
The term for a baby suffocating while sleeping.

Ikani
Over there.

Iliqisamaaq
Nodding your head sideways.

Illuarjukuluk
[South Baffin] Term used when two male cousins address each other.

Illukuluk
[South Baffin] Term used when two female cousins address each other.

Ilummuttaq
Game in which children would jump forward and backwards with their feet together. The person who could do this the longest would be the winner.

Iluquti
A toy made from a caribou hoof.

Iluttimiq
A foetus that has become fully formed.

Imilluttaq
A game made from a part of a caribou hoof to which strings are attached; the strings are twirled and then pulled to make a sound.

Innisijuq
To fetch a light for a qulliq that has gone out.

Inua
Spirit of a natural object.

Inugalaaluit
Tuurngait that are animals in human form.
Inugarulliit
Small human-like beings said to have lived near the shore. If you looked at them from their feet up, they would look very large. They are very strong. They suffocate people with their groins.

Inuksuk
[singular], inuksuit [plural] A stone cairn with many functions, such as serving as a beacon for travellers. It was also used when hunting caribou.

Inuqaliqpat
When a chick is already well developed inside an egg.

Inuruujuit
Human-like entities.

Inuruuqqajut
Animals in human form.

Inuujait
Small homemade dolls formerly made of ivory, now made of wood.

Iqiqqunguaq
The baby toe.

Imirllunniq
Miscarriage [Pirlunniq is an older word to describe this].

Itsaq
Sealskin tents.

Ittuq
Grandfather, or old man.

Kaggaqtuq
To become pale with fright.

Kakivvingajuq
Knockkneed.

Kakkiviaq
Nose canal, the area between the nose and the lip.

Kalirvak
The sound of a catch being dragged behind the qamutiik.

Kaliviqtaq
A game in which children would skip rope. They would cross over the rope and go lower and lower under the rope to see how low they could get.

Kamiik
Sealskin boots; any footwear.

Kamikallait
Short kamiik without ties.

Kangaaqtuq
Having a premonition or expectation that isn’t fulfilled.

Katajjaq
Throat-singing.

Katangguaq
[singular], katannguat [plural] Inuksuit shaped in the form of an iglu entrance.

Kikkaqtuq
Eating the remnants of the meat on a bone after the rest of the meat had been removed.

Childrearing Practices
Kinguk
A tiny shrimp, krill.

Kipiniatqutuq
To languish for someone or something to a point it affects you physically.

Kivijurniuti
A three-pronged hook for dragging up animals that have sunk.

Kumaruat
Rock lice.

Mamaggaq
[singular], mamaggait [plural] A moulting seal.

Manittugaq
Sobbing and crying heavily.

Mikiliranguaq
The toe beside the baby toe.

Miluqtippuq
He or she has hit himself or herself with a ball.

Mitiq
An elder duck.

Naalagiaqutuq
Going over to listen; evening prayer.

Naanngijaaq
A game in which children race hopping on one foot, to see who is the fastest.

Naanngijaaq aqausiq
A game in which you would hold a toddler’s hand and sing to the child while the child was hopping on one foot.

Najangajaq
A game played with a child’s toes in which they are shaken and then the child has to move them.

Nangiarniq
Fear of falling, fear of heights.

Nanguluttuq
To cause disharmony.

Napajuq
To give birth in an upright position.

Naqiaragtii
A toy made from a caribou hoof.

Niaquut
A band tied around the head to relieve pressure and get rid of a headache.

Ningaatuq
To attack one’s spouse physically.

Niviuqtuq
To act protectively.

Nunujuq
Hesitation while giving birth.

Nuvaktuq
To have a cold; having mucus.

Paqtuqtiq
A disease in which the skin opens up in a lot of spots and there is pus.
Pijaqsaijuq
To symbolically bestow skills on boys to make them good hunters.

Pirlunniq
Miscarriage [This is an old word, today *irmirlunniq* is more common]

Pittailiniq
An act one should refrain from because it is forbidden. Breaking a pittailiniq would result in serious consequences to the individual or to the camp.

Pullatit
A fox trap made in the shape of a cairn.

Putuguq
Big toe.

Qajaq
A one-person boat.

Qallunaaq
[singular], *qallunaat* [plural] A white person.

Qalupalik
[singular], *qalupaliit* [plural] [South Baffin] Human-like creatures that live in the sea. [North Baffin/Kivalliq] *qallupillik*.

Qammaq
A sod house; also a domeless snowhouse whose top is covered with hides or a tent; also can refer to an ice-walled circular house, a *tugaliq*. If this is covered with hides or a tent it is also called a *qammaq*.

Qamutiik
Dog sled.

Qaqajuq
The reaction of a child when they are feeling they are the centre of attention.

Qaqiliqtuq
To lose the ability to hear birds.

Qaqqaq
A hill.

Qariaq
Guest bed platform.

Qatimaajuq
The sound that a *qalupalik* makes under the ice.

Qiliqti
Hair style where braids are wound into a knot at the side of the head.

Qingaq
The ventilation hole in an iglu.

Qisiq
A sealskin pelt.

Qitiqtnnguaq
The middle toe.

Qivaqit
Small yellowish sculpins with big stomachs.

Quaqsaatjuq
A person who is easily startled; or a person who can’t handle seeing blood or wounds, etc.

Quiniq
Urinating, in adult language.
Qulliq
The traditional seal-oil lamp.

Qutturauti
Thigh warmer.

Quummittaq
A game in which children snapped their feet together while jumping in the air.

Sanaji
Literally: one who ‘creates’ or ‘makes’. The midwife at a birth.

Saraliqtuq
A condition in which a baby’s skin was sweaty and the baby wanted to sleep.

Sauniapik
See avvaq. Also atikuluk atikuluapik, atitsiaq.

Siaqqajuq
To feel hurt and bothered.

Silaat
Albino birds and animals.

Silapaaq
Outer coat [South Baffin].

Silusimajuq
To have one’s feelings hurt. Feeling hurt by something that was done to one.

Sipiniq
[singular], sipiniit [plural] A male child that transforms into a female shortly before or just after birth.

Sullitiit
A saying that is true.

Surjuktuq
To express your anger to a person in person.

Taima
That’s enough.

Takurngaqtuq
When a child acts strangely when they see something they don’t know. See also aallajuaqtuq. Adults can also takurngaqtuq when they don’t recognize someone or something they see.

Tarriassuit
Invisible human-like beings that sometimes make themselves visible to people. Also known as the shadow people.

Tau
Term used by angakkuit and non-human beings for Inuit.

Tausunni
It smells like a human.

Tauva
There you go.

Tikinnguaq
The toe beside the big toe.

Tirilliuk
The skin of a young bearded seal.

Tullilijaqtuq
Hair style where braids were tied at the sides of the head.
**Tulukkiniq**
A child who has grown up in an environment of fear.

**Tuniit**
People who inhabited the land before Inuit. Often associated with the Dorset people.

**Tunillaqtuq**
To leave something at a grave site as a gift for the deceased.

**Tuqturarniq**
Relationship terms used to address others. For example, terms of kinship, partnership, friendship and so on.

**Tuurngaq**
[singular], **tuurngait** [plural] An angakkuq’s helping spirit.

**Ugjuk**
Bearded seal.

**Unikkaaq**
[singular], **unikkaat** [plural] A story of recent origin.

**Unikkaaqtauq**
An old story.

**Unngiqtaq**
The ties at the waist of a pair of pants.

**Unniqsiurniq**
When a child or an adult tells someone about something good that was done for him or her.

**Uqausiqtat**
A saying.

**Uquuquq**
Something furry, in baby talk. Term used to identify an animal to a young child. If said by a young child without prompting, it meant that someone would catch a seal.

**Uquutaq**
A game similar to hide and seek, where the person who is hiding whistles to give a clue to the seeker.

**Uviuraq**
A pacifier for a baby, often walrus blubber.
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SCHAEFFER, O. and MÉTAYER, M.

SHEA, E.M.

WASHBURN, H. & ANAUTA