

Kinngait Trip Report (October 6 – 15, 2003)
Summary of Gita Laidler's Preliminary Research Visit for "Ice, Through Inuit Eyes"

Purpose of the trip: to meet community members and organizations to discuss a project on sea ice and see if there is any interest in collaborating on future research trips.

Purpose of this report: to update the community members of Kinngait on: i) what I did during my trip; ii) concerns that were raised; iii) observations that were shared; iv) recommendations that were made; and, v) my future research plans.

What I did during my visit to Kinngait →

- Met with the SAO and the Hamlet Council
- Met with the Qikiqtani Inuit Association Representative
- Met with the Lands Committee (through QIA)
- Met with the HTA board members
- Held a call-in radio-show
- Met with the Peter Pitseolak Secondary School principle, and some teachers
- Met Nunavut Arctic College representatives
- Met many community members along the way

Concerns raised →

- Scientists have been coming to Kinngait since the 1960s, but many researchers have not reported back to the community about their study results.
- Sea ice conditions are a definite concern since there is always a floe edge near town, and it is always changing with different winds, currents, and seasons.
- Pollution from the town, and from burning, is found on snow and ice far away. Some concern was expressed for the wildlife that might be ingesting this pollution.

Observations shared →

- No research like this, that people know of, has been conducted in Kinngait before.
- Kinngait is one of the few communities in Nunavut where you can boat year-round.
- The ice is forming later each year, and it is not as easy to read the clouds or weather to determine what short-term forecasts might be.
- The ice used to be twice as thick as it is today.
- In the spring time, the ice is not as safe compared to the same times in the past, when people used to be able to walk/ drive on it.
 - It was possible, in the 1960s, to travel on the sea ice until the end of June, and now it cannot be used at the end of June.
 - These changes are especially noticeable in the inlets, where July used to be the latest time to travel and now it is more like the end of April.
- People used to be able to walk on the ice in October, now not usually until December.
 - When some elders were growing up, the ice would be forming in the inlet around early-mid October, and now it is not.
 - When travelling by dog team people used to be able to travel in November, but now in the same areas they cannot travel until around January.
 - The floe edge is closer in January/February/March, compared to 40 years ago.
 - In the middle of winter, when the ice breaks up (due to the difference in high and low tides), it used to crack in the same areas throughout the winter – now it cracks in more, and different, areas.

- Every year in the last few years, the ice has been leaving sooner than it used to.
- The ice is a lot rougher than it was during the 1960s.
- The currents are getting stronger.
- This type of research can be really useful, it can help the younger people.
 - It would be good to involve the younger people so they can learn from elders, but younger people should also be consulted about their own observations/concerns.

Recommendations made →

- People to talk to:
 - Active hunters – because they travel on the sea ice a lot and know which areas, and which types of ice, are suitable/desirable for particular kinds of marine wildlife.
 - Elders – because they have detailed and historical knowledge of the different local ice conditions around Kinngait and the Hudson Strait area.
 - Names of several individuals were put forward as excellent people to talk to/interview on return research visits.
- Consult the weather station at the airport regarding ice thickness records and other weather gauge records.
- Report back to community contacts throughout the project, and with final results.
- During the radio show community members, of all ages, were encouraged to speak their mind, share their concerns, and voice suggestions i.e. (to get involved in the project).
- This project has to be right out in the community, people have to know about it because they are not talking about these issues.
 - The weather and climate are changing, and it is good to tell community members in Kinngait, but also to tell other communities about what is going on here.
- Return for freeze-up (November/December) and break-up (May/June) times
 - Coming back in early November would be a good time to see early stages of ice formation, especially in inlets.
 - Come back in spring because the ice is getting thinner/more dangerous in June, so it would be good to learn about thawing processes and how people manoeuvre it.

Future research plans

- November, 2003 onwards → I, along with my professors and your recommendations, will develop a variety of funding proposals to send to different agencies to acquire sufficient funds to conduct this project.
- November, 2003 – April, 2004 → I will conduct a lot of background research on ice conditions, climate, and previous research in the Kinngait/Hudson Strait area.
- June, 2004 → return to Kinngait for a 1-month field research trip.

Thank you for hosting me in your community, and for all your support. I very much enjoyed my time in Kinngait, and I look forward to returning and working with you in June. Feel free to contact me any time with comments, questions, or suggestions.

Sincerely,

Gita J. Laidler