

**Pangnirtung Trip Report (September 24 – October 5, 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 Pangnirtung 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 Pangnirtung →**

- Met with the Mayor and SAO
- Met with the Wildlife Officer
- Met with the Angmarlik Visitor's Centre manager
- Met with Nunavut Arctic College representatives
- Met with the Qikiqtani Inuit Association Representative
- Met with the HTA board members
- Met with the Elder's Group
- Held a call-in radio-show (having become a member of the Allaniq Radio Society)
- Met with the Fisheries plant manager
- Met with the Attagoyuk High School principle, vice principle, and some teachers
- Met many community members along the way

**Concerns raised →**

- Many researchers have not reported back to the community about their study results.
- The effects of global warming (i.e. how livelihoods, access to country foods, and Inuit culture would be affected if the ice were to ever disappear).
- Uncertainty about the total, and final, project budget.

**Observations shared →**

- No research like this, that people know of, has been conducted in Pangnirtung before.
- An "Area Economic Survey" of the East Coast of Baffin Island was conducted in 1966 (it has informative historical sea ice, wildlife harvesting, and climate data).
- The ice is forming very late and is not very safe. People cannot get out hunting until later and caribou hunting grounds are harder to access.
  - In the past 2 winters there has been thicker ice that lasted longer than previously.
  - Freeze-up often does not occur until mid- or even late-December (some people have still been boating until the end of December), and it used to be frozen in November or even late-October.
  - When the ice first forms, it used to only take 2-3 days for someone to be able to walk on it. Now, even after a week, it may be unsafe.
  - The summers are longer now.
  - Nearby glaciers are melting or have disappeared.
- Polar bears never used to be spotted around town, only within the last 10 years or so.
- Sea ice seems to have a different consistency, or different formation process than before, and there has not been as much extreme cold.
  - Traditional rules used to determine whether the ice is safe, just by looking at it, no longer apply (the ice always has to be tested to see if it is safe).

- The ice these days is of a different consistency, it looks different.
- When the ice is melting, there seems to be more pollution on the ice, stuff that looks like soot, and that may be causing the ice to melt faster.
- Documenting community members' knowledge and observations of sea ice characteristics and/or changes not only helps future generations, but it also enables scientists to access this information and, therefore, take it more seriously.
- People of Pangnirtung are/will be very affected by global warming trends.

### **Recommendations made →**

- People to talk to:
  - Fishermen – because they work on the ice all the time in the winter months.
  - 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 many of them come from different outpost camps around Cumberland Sound, so they have detailed knowledge of the different local ice conditions around the Sound.
  - Names of several individuals were put forward as excellent people to talk to/interview on return research visits.
- Researchers should come to the community with an open mind and be willing to learn, because it is a continual, lifelong process.
  - Report back to community contacts throughout the project, and with final results.
- One research priority should be safety. Snowmobiles are now used instead of dog teams; therefore, many people have lost the help of canine instincts to guide them around unsafe ice.
  - People have to be able to gauge ice safety from a machine, and at faster speeds.
- Return for freeze-up (December/January) and break-up (May/June) times.
  - To see the ice in its most frozen state, it is best to return in February, but to see it before the snow comes it would be good to return in January.
  - The project should last more than one year to see the whole ice cycle.

### **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 Pangnirtung/Cumberland Sound area.
- May, 2004 → return to Pangnirtung 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 Pangnirtung, and I look forward to returning and working with you in May. Feel free to contact me any time with comments, questions, or suggestions.*

Sincerely,

Gita J. Laidler