

Mamisaijjustuqait: Counselling and Healing Practices

Different categories of illness

Is there a difference between a person being aanniajuq, aanniqtuq or qanimajuq?

Aalasi: There are different terms in different dialects.

Jaikku: The term *aanniqtuq* is not the same as *aanniajuq*. You would use *aanniqtuq* if you suddenly got hurt.

Is qanimajuq more serious than aanniajuq?

Aalasi: *Qanimajuq* refers to a person who is bedridden because they are ill. Someone who is *qanimajuq* is in bed because they are too ill to be up and around. The person is not well enough to do anything.

Jaikku: *Qanimajuq* is being so sick that you cannot get up.

If a person is aanniajuq, can they get up and about?

Aalasi: Yes, even though a person is *aanniajuq*, they are able to be up and about even though they feel pain. If we were hit by a vehicle, it would be *aanniqtuq*. It would be the same if we slipped and fell. It is not the same as *qanimajuq*.

I have heard that if a person is aanniajuq, the person is aware of what is going on and is not in critical condition. Aanniajuq is when a person feels pain in their hand or their head or any other part of their body.

Aalasi: Yes. You are aware of the pain. It is different from *qanimajuq*.

Jaikku: If a person is *aanniqtuq*, he is just *aanniajuq*, just in pain.

Aalasi: Yes. The person is capable of moving around and being up and about.

Jaikku: I have had mucous in my lungs for quite a while now. Sometimes I am in pain and sometimes I'm not. It is not a big concern to me so I will see the doctor when we are finished the course. I am taking medication to ease the pain so it doesn't bother me too much. But if I move in a certain way, I can feel the pain.

Aalasi: That is an example of *aanniajuq*. She is able to do things.

What would you call a person who was sick internally?

Aalasi: We would say they were *qanimajuq* if they were sick internally.

Jaikku: If I was in a lot of pain, I would stay in bed and I would not be able to come here. I would be *qanimajuq*. Right now I'm not in any pain. If every time I moved around and was in a lot of pain and I was bedridden, I would be *qanimajuq*. Otherwise, it is just *aanniajuq*. Even though we feel some pain we are able to do things. As we grow older, it gets harder for us.

Aalasi: As we grow older we are sick more often. Every time someone asks me how I am doing, I reply that I am fine even though I feel quite tired.

If someone had a cut would they be aanniqtuq?

Aalasi: They would be *aanniqtuq* if they were hit by a vehicle or if they were *nakattuq*, had fallen and broken a leg.

Jaikku: Actually if you broke a leg it would be *naggijjuq* not *nakattuq*. That would be an example of *aanniqtuq*.

Aalasi: The interpreters at the hospital need to know the difference between *aanniqtuq*, *aanniajuq*, and *qanimajuq*. Elders more than sixty years of age do not speak any English. If the interpreters do not know the difference in terminology, some doctors get the wrong information. That is what happens when an interpreter does not have enough training to accurately repeat what the patient is saying. Interpreters need to have a lot of training. Some people have illnesses that the doctors don't hear about because the interpreters do not know how to interpret correctly. Sometimes medication that is not suitable for the patient is prescribed because of miscommunication. If we are going to have Nunavut, the interpreters will need more training than ever¹.

Jaikku: I strongly agree with that.

Aalasi: I strongly recommend that interpreters get proper training before Nunavut is created.

Jaikku: If someone is not seriously injured, the medication that the doctors prescribe may be too strong and it might be harmful.

Aalasi: The wrong type of medication can damage the bone marrow, or the brain or the bones.

If you take antibiotics when you don't really need them your body can develop a resistance to them and they they don't work when you are really sick and you do need them.

Jaikku: Some people are harmed by medication.

Aalasi: The medication that is prescribed does not have instructions in Inuktitut, only in English. We cannot understand what we have to take and when to take it. If our children do not read the instructions to us, we do not know what the prescription says. I know of an elderly person who took medication orally that he was to insert in his anus because he was not given instructions. For that reason, we need to get proper translations with our medication. You should make this a part of what you are studying here. It scares me to know that elders do not receive proper translations. I do not understand why. Iqaluit is a big community now and yet we still do not receive proper translations. It is very frustrating sometimes.

Jaikku: I know of cases where people were prescribed medication that was too strong so they had to stop taking it. They were prescribed weaker medication after being given medication that was too strong for them the first time. I know this has happened many times.

Aalasi: At the hospital, the terms *aanniqtuq*, *aanniajuq* and *qanimajuq* are not well known. They need to be clearly understood. I have stopped taking many different types of medication because they were not relevant to my sickness.

Yes.

Jaikku: I do not normally take medication even if I am feeling a bit of pain. The medication that was prescribed to me was too strong. I am supposed to take two pills every four hours. I only take one now and then when I need it. I take less than three a

day and that's enough for my pain. The doctor knows me pretty well. He told me that I could take the medication as needed. There has to be more attention paid to medication. Some medications are really strong and can be very dangerous.

What does qavuq mean?

Aalasi: People who are *qavuit* are so sick, they are bedridden.

Would they be like someone who was qanimajuq?

Aalasi: Yes.

Is this word used for both humans and animals?

Akisu: Yes. Animals that are sick are also *qavuit*.

Aalasi: If an animal such as a caribou or a seal was caught and it was sick, then it was not eaten. It was *qavuq*.

Jaikku: Animals would be *qavuit* if they had a disease. In Kinngait where I come from, we call ducks *qavuit* if they are really frail and sickly and are so weak that they cannot even fly. Their stomachs are sick from something they have swallowed. When they are like that we say they are *qavuit*.

Aalasi: Some seals have a disease in their intestines and their livers. They are also called *qavuit*. Some Inuit use the word *qavuit* for sick people. We have different dialects.

Akisu: People from this area do not use the term *qavuit* to refer to humans. I know that in the old language, sick animals were called *qavuit*. When people were hunting, both land and sea animals were called *qavuit* when they were sick. People from this area do not use the term *qavuit* for humans even though we understand it if it is used by other people. Young people today call both humans and animals *qavuit* when they are ill.

Aalasi: Even if someone is lethargic they say they are *qavuq*.

Jaikku: In my dialect, that's not the word we use.

Akisu: We should try and make an effort to understand terms for the same thing from different dialects.

I have heard that worrying can be very stressful.

Aalasi: That is the truth. We all experience that. Worrying can be very stressful. It can even destroy people.

Jaikku: People that are too depressed can commit suicide. Because they are so depressed, they carry a heavy load and become sick internally.

Aalasi: They have a mental illness.

Is being depressed an illness?

Aalasi: It is an illness of the mind, not of the body.

Akisu: *Isumaluttuq* and *isumaaluttuq* have different meanings. A person who has a bad temper is *isumaluttuq*. A person who is in a worried, depressed state, is *isumaaluttuq*. If you know how to use finals in syllabics, you can see that the words are different. You can only tell the difference if the finals are written.

Would an earache be considered qanimaniq or aannianiq?

Aalasi: An earache is not *qanimaniq*. It is *aannianiq*.

Are children the only ones who get earaches?

Aalasi: No, adults get earaches too.

How does the eardrum become punctured?

Jaikku: It probably becomes punctured if it bursts when someone has an ear infection.

How were you able to tell if someone started getting ill?

Aalasi: In the past people got sick like they do today. Often we couldn't tell where a sickness came from. If it was a stomach-ache or a headache, we were able to tell what it was. People were not sick very often back then though, only rarely. Quite often we couldn't tell where an illness came from.

Jaikku: We could only tell where an illness came from when the ship came in. Everyone would get a cold then. That is what it was like when I was growing up in Kinngait.

Aalasi: When a dogteam went to get supplies, that was another time we would catch a cold. Once we got over it, we would be really healthy again.

Jaikku: Not too long ago, people started getting diseases such as measles. We suspected that they came from the *qallunaat*. There used to be sicknesses that everyone caught that were contagious and we thought these came from *qallunaat*. When dogteams from different camps met each other, we would hear about a person that was ill from another camp. It was very rare for someone to be ill.

Aalasi: In the past no one thought that diseases were contagious. Even when we were caring for a person who was ill, we did not think twice about catching anything. Even if the person who was ill was in bad shape, nobody ever stopped to think that they might catch what that person had. We did not even think about washing our hands after caring for a sick person. When we were caring for a very ill person, we would be exposed to the sick person's spit and to their blood.

Jaikku: We would even use the same containers they spat in over and over again, without cleaning them or wiping them.

Aalasi: We would use the same ones over and over again as we did not have any others. We did not catch anything at all. Today, if we are caring for a sick person we are advised to wear gloves. We didn't know that back then. Those of us over the age of fifty don't really believe in wearing gloves. We were used to taking care of very sick people who were dying. It was only after the *qallunaat* came that there were contagious diseases. That was the first time we heard that illnesses could be contagious. We did not think like that before.

Jaikku: When we used to live in Kinngait, colds were the only thing we knew that were contagious. We used to catch colds when I was a little girl.

Aalasi: Elders today, including myself, think that lice help to control and remove illness from our bodies. People always got fresh blood when the lice sucked out the old blood from our bodies. We elders like to think that lice remove illnesses.

Do you think our health is connected to the land?

Aalasi: In the past, people had a very healthy diet. The food they ate prevented them from getting sick. Eating plants that came from the land and not from the

store also helped to keep people healthy. They would search for plants and for seaweed on the beach. They had a very healthy diet. They would eat a whole seal including the intestines.

Jaikku: They used to eat the entire seal except for the gall bladder, the bladder, and the contents of the intestines. Those were the only inedible parts.

Aalasi: I ran into a woman who had the same idea about something as I did. Back then, when we were living more traditionally we ate healthy country food. Only when we were low on food did we eat whatever was available. Because of this, our bodies do not recognize food from the store or medication. That is the reason why we get sick so easily.

Jaikku: We were not raised eating food from the store. It does not seem like a proper diet for children today. Mothers used to feed children boiled meat and broth. That was the main diet for a child who was learning how to walk. The mother would chew the meat and feed it to the child, softening it first. Mothers would also take sips of broth and pass them to the baby orally. We never even thought that we might be passing on something contagious by feeding our babies this way.

Aalasi: When I visited Nunavik, I noticed people still doing that, especially elders feeding their grandchildren. Elders still do that with fish broth too. The doctors are amazed that a child fed like this can be very healthy or big for their age. A person needs to eat well to grow and be healthy. Some children go for a whole day without eating now. They are following their mothers around and staying up all night. They are tired, and don't get the fluids they need for their bodies.

Jaikku: Children like to eat when they get hungry. They like to nibble on things all the time. They like living in a stable home. Preschoolers like to nibble all day. These days, children do not eat as much after they start in school because they spend the whole day there.

Aalasi: Even after school, they do not spend very much time with their parents. Because of that, they are not eating as well as they should. They stay up much later now. They are tired and for that reason they don't seem as healthy. Also, the clothing they wear today is not very warm.

Relations between men and women

When you were young was a person's physical appearance important to you?

Aalasi: Yes it was. It was important to have a healthy body. If a person had a healthy body, it meant that he or she was taking care of him or her self. We were advised to take care of our bodies.

Jaikku: We were advised not to have premarital sex so that we could get a husband. Things like "Men are not going to desire you," "You will not have a husband," or "You will stay unmarried for a long time," were the things that were said to us. Even though we did not really want a husband, these words were very scary.

Aalasi: Even though we didn't want a husband we listened to our parents' advice. We were told never to wear torn clothing. We tried to be presentable. Women had to try and take care of themselves. That was one way a person could tell whether you took care of yourself or not. Someone who took care of themselves would be chosen over someone that did not. It meant that they would be able to take proper care of their children.

Jaikku: We were advised to stay away from men so that we would have a stable home later in life. We were told not to have sex with anybody; not to let men play with us. That was the advice we received.

Aalasi: We were told that if we were with a man he would tell everyone we had been with him. After a man had been with a woman, he would tell stories about her. We were told to commit ourselves to one man so that rumours about us would not be spread. We were told that a man would never settle down with us if we slept around. It was as if women were just beads on a string.

What do you mean just beads on a string?

Aalasi: It is as if the man is stringing up women like beads. He would be with me, then with you. It has been said that men spread stories about women and that is the truth. A woman was advised only to go with a man that she had committed herself to. She was not to give herself to a string of men. Some women bear children from men they are not going to live with. Most men do not want this type of woman. We used to be attracted to men but this was in our minds only. We never had any relationships with them.

Jaikku: Sometimes we would steal glances at a man while he was not looking. We would not dare to make eye contact if he looked at us. We could only look at a man if he was unaware of this.

Aalasi: If he was not going to be our husband, we were advised not to pay any attention at all.

Jaikku: We could admire a man like we admired other things.

Aalasi: A woman who did not consort with men was considered a good potential wife. You could tell that she would take good care of the household and the children. You brought up an important question. You will be able to use our advice with your own children. Because our children do not listen to us anymore it seems we haven't told them about these things. We have the desire to pass on what we have been taught.

Jaikku: No wonder. It was scary not to listen to what you were told. We were advised by our mothers, our grandmothers, and our relatives that we should not hang out at any old place. It seemed like we were given advice every day.

Aalasi: It seems as if we were given advice all the time!

Jaikku: We were told that when you had sex with a man it would be painful. Once you are being given to a man, ouch, how painful. Our whole body hurt and it was scary.

Aalasi: There was one piece of advice I often remember. I guess this was because what was said meant a lot to me. You have heard of Ilaija Kiinainnaq's father, Kiinainnaq. I visited their place when I was pregnant the first time. While I was eating, the people I was visiting went out and Kiinainnaq spoke to me. He was a minister. He used to preach outside. He told me to stay behind because he wanted to talk to me. He said, "I have something to tell you and you look like the type of person that is easy to talk to. I am going to advise you how to live your life. You shouldn't have sex with anyone except your husband. Even if a man tries to go with you, you have to stand firm and refuse. If you refuse, he will not try it again. Even though we men want someone, if the woman does not say yes, then we don't bother trying again. Don't ever think of anyone except your own husband. If you start thinking of someone else, then you are already caught in a bind even if you tell yourself that you are not going to go with him. If you start thinking about another man, his feet will end up under your blankets." That is what he said to me. That advice has had a very big impact on my life. It is as though it is the wind on my sail. I am really grateful for his advice as it has guided me through life. That is the kind of advice we should be giving our daughters and nieces. The problem is that they do not want to listen. You get the feeling they won't agree with your advice anyway.

He was my grandfather's grandfather.

Jaikku: Young women no longer listen these days. When we were young, we always feared men and we were never near them, so much so that we would end up marrying men we didn't even know. We married men we did not even know. We were virgins then. People tend to laugh at this when we say this now, but we used to get married to men we didn't even know. It is not like today at all.

Aalasi: There used to be marriage ceremonies where the woman was crying because she did not want to get married. She would say, "I do," because it was God's will. When you look back, it seems that marriage worked better then than it does today. I wasn't crying when I got married. We were married outside after my first child was on the way.

Jaikku: I got married after I had had my first child.

Could you tell that a man was attracted to you by the way he looked?

Aalasi: Yes, it is still like that today. You can tell if a man is attracted to you by the way he looks at you. We don't try to notice this but it is obvious.

Jaikku: When a woman refuses to go with a man, he doesn't try again. He wouldn't dare.

Aalasi: He can be friends with the woman, but if he thinks that he can go to bed with her, he will keep trying. A woman has to take proper care of herself. My father gave me more advice than my mother did because I spent more time with him. My father used to talk to me about what a woman should be like. He used to say if I didn't take care of myself, then I wouldn't be able to take care of my home either. This advice is like a woman's Bible. A woman who takes care of herself takes care of her home and is committed to taking care of her family. If a woman did not take care of her house or if she did not help her husband when he was preparing to go hunting, she was considered a bad wife. A woman like that was one who had slept around when she was young.

Were you able to tell that a person was in pain even though he or she looked alright?

Aalasi: Are you taking about physical illness or depression?

Both of them.

Aalasi: Even if someone is up and about, it is not hard to tell if they are depressed. They often isolate themselves from others.

Jaikku: Today people who are depressed are more visible. Back then, people didn't seem to suffer from depression as much.

Aalasi: There did not seem to be as many depressed people back then.

Effects of the weather on the body

Some words are used for both the body and for the weather. For example, ikullaumijuj means the weather is calm, and it also means a sick person is getting better.

Aalasi: Yes. You are correct. The full moon, bad weather and calm weather affect a person.

Another example of this is auppug, which means the snow is melting or his nose is bleeding.

Aalasi: Yes, the word has two meanings.

It is as if our bodies and our environment are similar.

Aalasi: No wonder! We are part of the earth, therefore the words are quite similar.

Do you know of any other words like these?

Aalasi: All I know is that a person can be affected by the weather. If the weather is fine, I feel better but if there is a blizzard, if the sky is not clear like today, I find my body heavy. That is the way it is; a person is affected by the weather.

Akis: If you are in good health, you don't feel the weather.

Jaikku: Yes. You will not feel it. Those who have had surgery many times are severely affected by the weather.

Aalasi: I can feel it in my scars if the weather is going to be bad.

Akis: I know Aalasi is very affected by the weather because she has a lot of surgical scars.

Aalasi: I have had a lot of surgery. I have been put under many times. I have had surgery on my spine.

Akisu: She has many scars so she is really affected by the weather and by the full moon.

Aalasi: If I wake up in the morning with my body feeling heavy, even if I haven't even opened up my eyes yet, I know the weather is bad or there is going to be a storm or snow or rain. When I wake up feeling well, I know that weather will be beautiful.

Akisu: If you have good health, the weather doesn't affect you.

Aalasi: When you are healthy you are not even aware of the weather. It is only when you have an unhealthy body, you notice it.

Is your body affected when there is a full moon too?

Aalasi: Yes. A full moon really affects the mind and the body. Your body becomes heavier and slower. I learned from an elder that spring water comes out at the full moon. I was told that the ends of our hair split open at the full moon as well. I did not believe what the elder had told me so I checked out my hair and it was true.

What is it called when your hair opens up at the ends?

Aalasi: *Qullurniit*, split ends. This elder also told me that if you pay attention, you can see that the hair in a man's mustache has split ends during a full moon. These things such as the spring water coming up really happen. I guess you all know or have heard of Lia Nutaraq, Siipa's mother. She taught me these things and they are true. I used to go and see her when I was feeling depressed. I always felt better after I went to see her. If I was having problems related to my husband or to my children, I would seek advice from her. She would advise me to go to sleep with my bed facing the north. North is the best direction to face when sleeping.

Akisu: When there is a north wind there are absolutely no clouds, and the sky is very clear. It is only when the wind is coming from another direction, that the sky is not clear. If it is calm at night after a north wind, the next day will be calm, but if the north wind calms down in the morning then the wind will shift and start blowing from another direction.

Aalasi: During the full moon the ends of our hair split more and we can get little bumps on our skin. These bumps are called *niumait*, goose bumps.

Could your body give you signs about what the weather would be like?

Aalasi: Yes. We did not have any weather instruments back then.

The relationship between illness and the environment

Aalasi: I'd like to add something on that topic. I wanted to tell you about going through a time of hunger when there was much unhappiness. After this had passed we were advised to throw a piece of food whenever we passed the place where this had occurred. Earlier we told you about going up on a hill or a high point, and having to pull our pants down and show our bum towards the wind if it had been windy for a long time. We used to be told to throw a piece of food when we were passing by this place by boat or dogteam. Nuvija Aipili has a lot to teach about many different topics. He is the one who told me about throwing a piece of food at this place.

Have you heard that when people started getting sick the land was considered hot and they had to move to another area?

Aalasi: Yes. In the spring we would move to another camp away from the area where people had been sick. My mother and my paternal aunt knew about this.

Jaikku: If there had been sickness at a place it was not suitable to live there any longer.

Did the land actually become hot?

Aalasi: No. It wasn't actually hot. Back then, we used to work together. Any animal that was caught was shared equally even when we had our own supply of food. We always respected what was caught. Food doesn't come from people. It comes from the land. Whether it is a small bird or a large animal, they have to be respected just the same.

Jaikku: We would welcome the food.

Did people have heart attacks back then?

Aalasi: Yes, that has always happened. There have always been people who have died suddenly. The difference today is that many people get heart problems from stress caused by other people. Back then, people did not have heart problems early in life.

Jaikku: The only way that you could tell if someone was ill was by using your eyes and your ears. We did not have any instruments to do check-ups with back then.

*Were people more fit back then, before qallunaat food was available?
Were there any overweight people?*

Aalasi: There were no extremely overweight people. Even though there were some heavy people, it was a different type of heaviness. The way that people sit today is also

part of the reason why they are overweight. Snowmobiles also contribute to this as not as many people walk anymore. Another cause is people wearing stretchable clothing. Today people look more bloated than they did before. I don't know why.

Did they use the term quinijug for a person who was fat back then?

Jaikku: Although there were only a handful of fat people back then we called them *silituit*, stout. While I was still living in Kinngait, my grandmother told me a saying about women who gained weight. A woman who had sex with a man too soon after her husband died gained weight and was said to be *pullaqtug*, bloated. We would only see fat people once in a long while. There was an old policeman named Uvinik. When he was younger, he came to Iqaluit, and noticed that there were quite a number of overweight women. He commented on that because he knew the old saying. I believe in that myself. I gained weight after being with a man even though it was more than three years after my husband died. I finally touched a man the fourth year after his death. My stomach got quite big. I really believe in that saying, even though this did not happen to me right away.

I looked like I was bloated after my spouse died. They say that happens to some people.

Aalasi: This happens sometimes after you lose a spouse.

Did that also happen when people stopped being under stress?

Jaikku: It was the truth for me.

I guess that also happened when people became less stressed.

Jaikku: Yes, definitely. Women went through a lot more things compared to today.

Aalasi: I used to be quite chubby at one time. I even had dimples. I lost some weight but later I gained the weight back again.

Was the term uvinittujuq used for those who were heavy as well?

Jaikku: Those who had always been heavy, that didn't become fat, were *uvinittujuq*. My *aana* was *uvinittujuq*.

When do we use the term aana?

Jaikku: My father's mother is my *aana*. If she was my mother's mother, then she would be my *anaanatsiaq*.

Aalasi: These days, everybody seems to use the term *anaanatsiaq* for both grandmothers.

What do you call your mother's father?

Jaikku: Both grandfathers are called *ataatatsiaq*. There are only different terms for grandmothers.

Aalasi: We Inuit did not have any written information. *Qallunaat* have everything written down. What we say will be written for our descendants.

Jaikku: It should be written down. I always tell myself that I am going to write things down before I am interviewed so that I have notes in front of me. I think about it but I am not very comfortable writing.

Practices before the introduction of bio-medicine: the uses of amulets and other objects

Aalasi: If you mix together the contents of a bird's stomach while they are warm you can use this on impetigo, or an infection or a wound. It was very effective. I saw this being used to treat my older sister. She had a very serious eye infection. She could not even open her eye. We don't really take the time to try out different remedies anymore. Remedies made from birds and animals that eat plants are the best.

Jaikku: We found out what worked through experimentation. Everybody relies on doctors now. Back then we experimented with different things to find out what was effective.

Aalasi: If you are out on the land for a long time or you got caught in a storm, these remedies could still be used.

Did you use foxes as well?

Aalasi: I have never heard of them being used. If a person was snow-blind and could not open their eyes, tea was used to treat them. I have never been snow-blind. I used to envy those who had been.

Jaikku: I didn't find tea bags that effective on my eyes. I often had snow-blindness.

What was used before tea bags were available?

Aalasi: Before tea was available, rabbit droppings were used. You would crumble them up, wrap them in cloth and apply them to the eyes. That is even better than tea. They are best when fresh, moist and wrapped in a cloth. They were said to work even better than tea.

Jaikku: My grandmother used to use *sungaq*, the gall bladder of a fish.

Did she use this to treat someone who was snow-blind?

Jaikku: No, she would use it to treat someone who was feeling pain. She used it as an ointment and rubbed it on an ache or pain.

Aalasi: The gall bladder is yellow in colour. The flesh of a fish will turn yellow if it touches the gall bladder.

Was it just the sungaq from a fish that she used?

Jaikku: Yes.

Aalasi: We even used to deal with tooth extractions. The tooth would be tied tight and pulled out. That was the only way they had to deal with a toothache.

Were you told to throw your tooth to a dog so you would have strong teeth?

Aalasi: Yes.

Akisu: That is how it was.

Did you hide it in a piece of palaugaq and feed it to the dog?

Akisu: Either that or in a piece of blubber. We hid it inside, and threw it to the dog. Then we would have excellent teeth. That is what I have heard.

Jaikku: We were told to do that every time we lost a tooth.

Aalasi: What they said was true.

Akisu: Everything that was done was done for a purpose. The part inside the fish that blows up, the *puttaqquti*, was used as an *attati*. When I was a small child I had one for an *attati*.

What is an attati?

Jaikku: Something you carry with you all the time.

Is an attati the same thing as an aarnguaq, something you carry with you all the time for protection?

Akisu: It is like an *aarnguaq*. First, you would try and prevent the *puttaqquti* from bursting. Then it would be dried and worn by a child so he would be a fast runner when he became an adult. The claws of the snowy owl were also used as an *aarnguaq*. A boy would wear them to make him strong.

Would the attatiit help people to be strong physically?

Jaikku: They wanted boys to be strong.

Akisu: What we are discussing makes me think I should give an *attati* to my grandson Simiuni. It worked for us. It was part of our culture and seemed to serve its purpose. We do not use these anymore.

Are snowy owls edible?

Aalasi: Of course. They are at their best when they are fat.

Jaikku: Just like a fox.

Is the puttaqquti pink in colour?

Akisu: It is long and right next to the spinal cord.

How do you keep from damaging it when removing the guts? Do you gut the fish while it is frozen?

Aalasi: For sure. Then it will not be damaged.

After you removed it, did you blow it up?

Aalasi: Yes. It lasted for a long time. You could also play with it like a balloon.

After they blew it up, where did they wear it?

Akisu: They attached it with thread.

Aalasi: A lot of children will be wearing *aarnguat* when we start catching fish.

I am going to put one on my chubby daughter. She is a very slow runner. I'm going to put one on my son too but I need to get the claws of a snowy owl first. Have you heard the story about the first angakkuq who had an itiq, a sea urchin, for an aarnguaq?

Akisu: People from different communities use different things.

Aalasi: Maybe people from further north used them more.

Akisu: People from South Baffin didn't use them as much. We have to gather this information. The way I see it today, we elders seem to be hiding in the stem of a pipe. We only come out when we are asked to help and meet with others and then we go back into the pipe again. We need to write our traditions down, even though in the past we passed them on orally. People are starting to discuss how families stuck together and how everyone lived a good life. They are talking about what created this harmony. *Qallunaat* have a lot of written information about their history. We Inuit should start writing things down too so that our knowledge is not forgotten and it is passed on. Inuit are very caring, very loving and very forgiving. We don't hold grudges. This knowledge has to be passed on so people know about these things.

Aalasi: We should talk about using animals for food, and how one should not torture animals. This is very important information.

Jaikku: It definitely has to be brought up. There have been animals killed which were not used for food. Animals are not toys to be played with.

Akisu: You are not to look down nor make fun of a person who is physically challenged, or a person who slurs their speech. If you make fun of their disability, the same thing will happen to you at a later time.

Aalasi: Even if it is not you yourself who is affected by this, it could be your child.

Akisu: It could be your child or grandchild who was affected.

Aalasi: It could be very risky for your descendants.

Akisu: For that reason, we are not to make fun of people with disabilities. It is not their fault.

Aalasi: Look at Qimmiqut Aakakaaq's wife who was buried not too long ago. Her brother was Palluq. He was adopted by Arnakallak. When he was down south being treated for tuberculosis, Malaija's husband Jaikkupuusi was there with him. Jaikkupuusi had a disability that was a result of an injection that affected his brain. He was unable to speak after that and he just kept his eyes open. His tongue was enlarged and hung out. Palluq used to make fun of him by hanging his tongue out. Jaikkupuusi was alert enough to understand that he was being made fun of. He wrote a note to the nurses saying he no longer wanted to live. Things didn't end there though. Palluq got a baby boy whose tongue hung out. His tongue tended to freeze and stick on things when he was outside. He had weird looking eyes. He became the foster child of a *qallunaat* couple. It was only after he had this child that Palluq realized what he had done. We should not make fun of others. It can be very dangerous.

Does the person who is being made fun of have his feelings hurt?

Aalasi: The person keeps their feelings deep down inside. They could even be dangerous to our grandchildren. We could spend a long time talking about this, as well as about the torturing of animals or dogs.

Jaikku: There are people who have become disabled because they made fun of other people. I know of two persons that happened to personally. One was a child.

Akisu: Even though we are elders now, we were born after our way of life had begun to change. We were born when Inuit had already become aware of God. We have only heard about the old way of life. I used to ask my mother's mother about the way she lived. I heard much about it from her. I didn't experience this myself. They had different beliefs back then. We are giving you information but there are other elders who have information as well. What you do not hear from us, you can hear from them.

It is very hard for us to ask questions to elders, since we are usually told that we are not supposed to. Sometimes we are afraid of being reproached.

Jaikku: It is hard to ask questions, even though you want to.

Aalasi: We were advised not to ask questions. I think it was a mistake in a way.

When I tend to ask questions I am never treated nicely. Once I even said, “I like to be answered when I ask something.” I was told, “You call yourself Inuit and yet you do not even understand proper Inuktitut.” I got really angry about that and I replied, “No wonder we do not understand. We are never welcomed when we ask questions.”

Aalasi: Yes. What you are saying is true. We used to be advised against asking questions. In a way it was wrong. We would have had more information to give you if we would have been allowed to ask questions.

Akisu: Although you won't be using everything you learn here on a daily basis, you still need to be informed. It's very difficult if you don't understand something, even if it is just words.

Aalasi: We are really enjoying being here as it is not stressful.

In the past, was animal anatomy used as a guide in understanding human anatomy?

Aalasi: They did not use animals for that.

Jaikku: If people were feeling pain, they would say, “I think there is something wrong with my insides.” They did not say, “I think I have a problem with my liver or my kidneys or my intestines.” It was not hard to tell where the pain was coming from.

Aalasi: They did not talk about their kidneys, intestines or liver. They could tell if they were having stomach problems though. If someone was vomiting and feverish, you could tell they were having stomach problems.

Did people have acne on their faces as we do now?

Aalasi: It was not common. We used to get scabies on our bodies but not on our faces. We didn't get many pimples back then.

Were the scabies itchy?

Aalasi: Yes. They were very itchy.

What do you think is the most important part of the body?

Aalasi: The brain is very important because it controls everything. What you see and what you hear is controlled by the brain. The fact that you can withstand heat or cold and the fact that you can change what is on your mind, makes me believe that the brain is the most important part of the body.

Have you heard about illnesses that travel to other parts of the body?

Aalasi: Nobody paid any attention to those things.

Jaikku: These days when a person gets sick, we are aware of sickness that travels to other parts of the body. We were not aware of that back then.

Aalasi: Yes, they did not talk about that back then. We knew when a person was terminally ill but we were not aware if an illness was travelling through the body. We didn't have any instruments to check temperature or pulse back then.

Jaikku: It is only recently that these things started to be used.

Aalasi: Someone who was sick was very well taken care of. The person was kept clean. A sick person was well taken care of right up to the time they died.

Jaikku: A sick person was provided with all the food they asked for. They never thought that it was dangerous to let a sick person eat what they wanted. No one thought that they might get worse if they ate a certain kind of food even if they were terminally ill. Our only concern was to give them what they asked for. Someone would go out hunting for whatever they requested. We would know when a person didn't have long to live.

Aalasi: Even ptarmigan could improve a person's health. When it seemed that a person could only get worse, they got better.

Jaikku: Even if they only had a small portion of what they requested it would be helpful.

Aalasi: The juice from the *qunguliit*, the mountain sorrel, is excellent for someone who is sick. My mother used to boil the mountain sorrel and give us the juice. It makes you sweat. That's why my mother would say it was good for someone who was ill. Seaweed has also been used to help people to recover from an illness.

Is it good for a sick person to sweat?

Aalasi: Yes. It is good. The illness is coming out then, so we like that.

Jaikku: We often get better after sweating.

Have you heard that when a sick person is going to get better, they start yawning?

Aalasi: People used to like it when a sick person yawned and sneezed. When someone started sneezing and yawning it was considered a good sign. I couldn't sneeze for almost a year after I was sent home after being in the South. I was told that I was not going to recover. I made an effort to go out and collect some small stones as I was looking for something to make myself feel better. I heated up the stones in water, removed them and wrapped them in a cloth. I would lay them on my stomach and sometimes on my back. These plain stones were very helpful to me. We are created from the earth as are the rocks. I was trying to use them to get better. I had heard from my aunt that stones could have healing properties. *Quajautiit*, rock tripe, are also helpful. You have to heat them up first, and then take a spoonful.

What ailment did you use them for?

Aalasi: My aunt said to use them whenever I wasn't feeling well.

If a person had something visibly wrong with them, for example, if their leg had been amputated, how did you prevent them from getting depressed?

Aalasi: I believe that even if you are missing an arm or a leg, or you have problems with your uterus, you are like that because you were meant to be that way. It is better to have to deal with a missing limb than to be whole and end up in Hell. That is the kind of advice I would give to someone like this who was feeling depressed.

Jaikku: It also helps to open the Bible.

Aalasi: Yes. Reading the Bible can lift your spirits. Having an amputated limb is nothing to worry about. Look at the birds that gather food for their young with only their beaks. Humans are much more capable than birds are. Birds have to make their nests and raise their young just using their beaks.

Are our minds affected by the full moon?

Jaikku: It is only recently that we have become aware that the full moon affects people. It seems to be getting worse.

Aalasi: The full moon did not seem to affect people back then. It is only now that a lot of people are gathered in one place and we are aware of the effects of the full moon. We knew that it was good to go clam digging at the full moon.

Jaikku: We used to be really happy when there was a full moon. Now those of us with health problems are *kangaaqtuq* when there will be a full moon.

What do you mean by kangaaqtuq?

Jaikku: It's something that makes you feel trepidation. We dread the full moon.

Aalasi: It is something you aren't looking forward to.

Jaikku: That is what I feel when I see the full moon. When I see it, I say, "Oh the moon is full." I never used to think about it that way. I used to be happy that there would be clams again.

Did you know any of the whalers?

Aalasi: We did not know them.

Jaikku: I have only heard of them. My grandmother knew of them. My grandmother used to say that the *maktak* and the meat of bowhead was really tasty.

The reason why I am asking is because I am interested in what type of illnesses they brought when they arrived.

Jaikku: I have never heard of any illnesses that the *qallunaat* brought with them when they arrived.

Aalasi: It is only after the whalers arrived that the ships started bringing colds. That is all I know. I have never heard of other illnesses being brought prior to that.

Jaikku: Even the bones of bowhead whales have disappeared. I think they have been taken away. We used the spinal bone as a pretend clock when we were little children.

Did people try and keep busy to keep their minds off things that were bothering them?

Aalasi: Yes. That is the way it was. That is true even today. Even though it is hard, we have to try and talk about what is bothering us. We should talk about our worries rather than trying to ignore them. If we try to keep busy, our worries go away for a while, but they always come back. It helps to keep busy, but it is best to talk to someone you know. That is the best way to deal with problems.

Can people become sick from worrying too much?

Aalasi: A person can become ill from worrying if they don't talk about what is bothering them.

Jaikku: This is how the healing that takes place today is conducted.

I have heard that men are different from women because they do not cry very often.

Jaikku: Very much so.

Have you ever heard of people who became sick because they were advised not to cry?

Aalasi: Yes. A person is not supposed to suppress their crying or they will end up sick. Men are different from us. We tend to talk about things but men talk about their emotions less. When it seems that they should be crying, they do not cry at all. They are tougher.

Jaikku: Men are tougher in every way. They are not like us at all.

I have heard that babies long ago were not as strong as babies today. Is this true?

Aalasi: They were not very strong even when they grew older. It seems today as if babies are born being able to hold up their heads almost immediately. Back then even if they were growing they were slow to gain strength.

Jaikku: They were like that for a long time.

Aalasi: Today it seems so if babies are born smiling. It is as if the newborns are already able to focus.

Jaikku: Back then, babies did not learn to smile for a long time. We had to say “*uuhui*” to try and make them smile. Babies wouldn’t smile right away. They would just stare at you. They are not like that today.

Aalasi: We were told that in the future everything would be rush, rush, rush, and that’s the way things are. Even babies grow up more quickly today. We have been told that we would live a fast life like the rest of the world and babies are like that today.

Uqumangirniq, paralyzing nightmares; and itillimaniq, sleepwalking
I would like to ask about uqumangirniq, paralyzing nightmares. What should you do when a person is having one?

Jaikku: It is very scary when you have *uqumangirniit* frequently.

Aalasi: I do not know what you should do for those who are *uqumangiqitut*.

Jaikku: If you know that someone is having that type of nightmare, you should wake them up. When there are signs that whoever you are sleeping with is experiencing this, you should wake them up. When you are experiencing this, even when you try to move you cannot.

Do nightmares come from evil?

Aalasi: I do not know. I have never heard that they come from evil. People have always had *uqumangirniit*.

Have people always had nightmares?

Aalasi: Yes, people have always had nightmares.

Jaikku: Anyone can have a nightmare.

Is it the same as itillimajuq, sleepwalking?

Aalasi: I guess it is similar.

Some people who are sleepwalking do not even know what they are doing.

Aalasi: Sleepwalkers do not know what they are doing when they sleepwalk. We foster parents had a workshop about sleepwalking. It made us better understand why people sleepwalk. Young children and teenagers that sleepwalk are very restless during the day. They sit down for a very short period and then they are up and walking around again. They seem to be searching for something. They are very restless. They do not seem to have any friends. They seem to have very short-term relationships with people. As soon as they fall asleep in the evening, they start sleepwalking. When you tell them to go back to bed, they do, but not long after they are up again. They go back, and then they get up again as though they are scared. If they were afraid the time they were up, the time after that they would be more calm. We were advised to put a damp cold cloth on their chest to wake them up.

Jaikku: Or you could wet your hand and sprinkle water on their face.

Aalasi: Then the person wouldn't sleepwalk again afterwards. We say they sleepwalk because they are so hyperactive. The real reason they are constantly worried is because their natural parents had mistreated them. All children like to live in a stable home. When children keep coming home to an empty house and their mothers are out, they are unhappy. They store their anger inside and they become very restless. During the day, they don't feel like playing and they don't have much of an appetite. They start sleepwalking once they fall asleep. I really understand where they are coming from.

Jaikku: People who often sleepwalk are like that.

Aalasi: People who sleepwalk often and those who rarely do, are different from each other. People who sleepwalk often are worried all the time and don't know what is going to happen next. They are holding things inside that they cannot talk about. That causes them to sleepwalk. Some even go outside without knowing that they have done so.

Jaikku: Some have the urge to go in the water.

Aalasi: Those who were fearful during the day, or whose parents caused them to worry, would sleepwalk at night. We were told to keep track of when they were sleepwalking to see if there were any patterns. We were told to compare children who came from a stable home with those who did not. We were advised to try and treat those from unstable homes better to see if this made a difference.

Jaikku: Do you think this is the way it is?

Aalasi: I really believe this as I have had two foster children who grew up in fear. One is now a teenager and the other one is still a boy. The younger one used to be very busy while he was sleeping. He would do all kinds of things while he was sleepwalking, some of which were dangerous, like going outside. He no longer does this anymore.

Jaikku: Where I come from, they used to say if a person went to sleep with their clothing on, they would sleepwalk. That is all I have heard about sleepwalking. That is what ordinary Inuit have said about this. They did not have an instructor to tell them about sleepwalking but that was what they said about it. Sleepwalking has always occurred. It used to be funny watching a child who was sleepwalking. They seemed to have an urge to go into water. One person even attempted to go into a pail of water. They did not appear to be afraid.

That can happen to adults too when they are worried, although it is more likely that they will talk in their sleep instead.

Aalasi: What I have seen is that if children have been very hyperactive during the day, they tend to sleepwalk.

I had a brother who was like that. Because he could never sit still, the teacher even sent him to the Nursing Station for a check-up.

Aalasi: How is he today?

He doesn't sleepwalk anymore.

Aalasi: My daughter's adopted child is like that. I took him for a check-up too.

My brother was very hyperactive. The ones who are very restless, twitch a lot when they sleep.

Aalasi: No wonder! They were hyperactive during the day.

What does nusuvuq mean? Does it mean twitching?

Jaikku: It refers to those who twitch constantly while they sleep, almost like they are running. Once they are asleep, they fall into a deep sleep and twitch nonstop.

Aalasi: Coming out of anesthesia, or if you walked a lot during the day, you tend to twitch a lot too.

You seem to be in a deeper sleep when that is happening.

Aalasi: That is how it is.

Perhaps this is because they have a lot on their minds.

Aalasi: Yes. They probably have a lot on their minds.

Have you heard that when someone is having a nightmare, you are not supposed to wake them up because they might be dreaming about something they are trying to come to terms with, such as death. There are different types of nightmares. Some are caused by memories of abuse. The victims can be having nightmares about their former abusers.

Aalasi: They might be having a nightmare about their abuser.

Jaikku: I have never heard of this.

Aalasi: I get scared really easily. I have always been like that.

Jaikku: I do not get scared easily, but I *uqumangiqtuq*, I have paralyzing nightmares. I can tell one is coming by the sound I get in my ears.

Aalasi: I do not know about twitching.

Jaikku: I know about it, but mine are not triggered by anything.

I have heard that people who have been abused can have blocked memories. The person remembers what happened through dreams. People like this should not be awoken as they are dealing with an unresolved issue. The person might end up dying.

Jaikku: How can you tell if a person is reliving a memory about being abused in their nightmare?

The person will be able to tell what happened to them after they wake up.

Aalasi: After the nightmare is finished?

The nightmare must be permitted to continue to the end. If the person is mumbling and looks scared, you should not wake them.

Jaikku: I only know of one type of nightmare.

Were those who were prone to having nightmares advised to put a Bible or an ulu or a knife under their pillow?

Aalasi: I have only heard of Bibles being placed under a pillow, not anything sharp.

Jaikku: When I think I am about to have a nightmare, I keep changing my body position. That is how I prevent it from happening.

Aalasi: Bibles are very comforting. They have always been placed under the pillow to help people sleep well and to help prevent them from experiencing *uqumangirniq*.

I have also heard that some people receive messages in dreams. For example if a deceased person wanted to be named they could appear in a dream and indicate this.

Akisu: Some people receive information through dreams.

Aalasi: Some pregnant women have said they have experienced that.

Some people have dreams about teeth or bears when someone is going to die. Do you believe in that?

Jaikku: We say that a person is *qunujaaqtuq* if they have a dream that is a sign that someone is going to die soon. They start wondering if they are going to lose a loved one when these signs come to them in dreams.

Akisu: *Qunujaaqtuq*, and *niriujaaqtuq* both refer to expecting something to happen, but *qunujaaqtuq* is an expectation that you dread. *Niriujaaqtuq* is expecting something good to happen.

Even if the person does not want this to happen, will it happen anyway?

Jaikku: Yes. It is as if they are being warned through the dream.

Are dreams important for the body?

Jaikku: Very much so.

Aalasi: I don't think they are very important. You should not even pay attention to them. Sometimes they do not mean anything. Some people believe in their dreams to the point that they are the only things they pay attention to. I know that our ancestors received premonitions through dreams, but not all dreams come true.

Jaikku: Some dreams come true. That is why some people say they are *qunujaaqut* and *niriujaaqutut*. It is a good sign if someone is *niriujaaqtuq* because of a dream.

Aalasi: When a baby said *uquuquq* it was a really good sign.

When a baby who couldn't yet talk well said uquuquq, did it mean that his father would be arriving soon?

Aalasi: Yes. That is how it was.

Jaikku: Everyone was really happy when a baby said *uquuquq*.

Aalasi: It was a form of predicting that someone would have a successful hunt.

Did they use an atsaqquq, a seal humerus, for this purpose as well?

Aalasi: We used an *atsaqquq* for this purpose as well. We would attempt to get the bone to stand upright when we tossed it.

Jaikku: It was just a game.

Did only children play it?

Jaikku: We all used to play guessing games with it.

Did people believe in this?

Aalasi: I guess because we wanted it to be true, we tried to believe in it.

Jaikku: There used to be different types of games that we would play and this was one of them.

Remedies for aches and pains

How were people who had a stomach-ache helped?

Jaikku: There are many reasons why someone might have a stomach-ache. If you have not had a bowel movement for an extended period of time, you tend to have a stomach-ache. Personally I was not very regular so when I had a bowel movement, I always felt better.

Aalasi: There was no particular treatment for a stomach-ache. I mentioned the other day that a rub could be applied to the stomach. That is the only treatment I know of.

How did you do this?

Aalasi: By placing the inside of a rabbit stomach on the tummy. I learned this from my aunt and my mother. There was no particular medication to cure a stomach-ache. I do not know of anything else you can do.

Didn't you have any leavening agents back then like baking powder? I seem to have heard something about them being used for upset stomachs.

Jaikku: We did not use *qallunaat* methods back then.

I guess animal and plant remedies were the only things used?

Jaikku: Things from the beach were also used.

Akisu: Rabbit lungs were excellent. They could heal your finger if you had an infected nail. *Miqqapiat*, seaweed found in brooks and creeks, were also good at sucking out an infection like this.

Jaikku: That could be very painful. Raw lungs could be used on an abscessed boil.

Could they be used for anything else?

Akisu: You could use them for anything that might be infected. They suck the infection out. Just put them on top of the infected part and they will work.

Do you have to make an incision in the infected part first?

Jaikku: You just apply them and they start working.

Akisu: Seaweed found in brooks and creeks also suck out infection. The *anaujaq*, the black part along the spine of the fish, can help people who are so dehydrated from food poisoning that they have no saliva. A person can be saved using this.

Can it be used when children have diarrhea so badly they have become jaundiced? Can we use it for that?

Aalasi: It is worth trying. That part of the fish has healing properties.

Were any parts of the caribou used for healing purposes?

Aalasi: The *tunnuq*, the fat, could be used to light the *qulliq*.

Was it used for anything else?

Aalasi: I do not know. I have not heard very much about caribou.

Akisu: We were born when there weren't many caribou around. They weren't talked about much. Ptarmigan and seaweed also had medicinal properties.

Aalasi: Bearded seal blubber was scraped and used for bandaids. It was chewed and scraped before being applied. The excess oil was scraped off. It was applied while it was damp. You had to make sure it didn't dry up after you applied it.

Akisu: Bearded seal blubber is the best. It can be scraped and used on major injuries such as gunshots or gaping wounds.

Aalasi: It prevents infection. Lemming skin is also good for this purpose.

Jaikku: It doesn't dry out the skin. You have to make sure you change the bandaid though, when needed.

When the bandaid was removed, was the infection removed along with it?

Aalasi: Once it was removed the infection was removed along with it. Bearded seal blubber is excellent for removing infection as well. My first husband shot himself in the hand and we could even see bone fragments. We were living where there were no *qallunaat* at the time. We spent the whole spring and summer out there waiting for the ice to freeze up so we could go where there were *qallunaat*. The bearded seal oil we applied was even able to remove the bone fragments. His hand was bent the other way

and some flesh was missing but it healed quite well. Although he was not able to obtain medical attention, his hand healed quite well. We also applied lemming skins. People had to make do with what they had. We didn't panic when we had a problem like this.

Jaikku: We used whatever was available.

Aalasi: There are leaves that are called *alatsaujait*.

Akisu: The *alatsaujait* are thick leaves.

Aalasi: They could be soaked and applied as a band aid.

Did you soak them in water?

Aalasi: You soaked them in water first, and then applied them. They could remove infection too.

Akisu: *Uqaujait* are young willow leaves. They are green. The small reddish leaves are called *alaksaujait* in our dialect.

Jaikku: The stiff ones are called *atungaujat*. They are whitish when they are ripe.

Are they mushrooms?

Aalasi: She is talking about mushrooms. The ones that have a stem, and grow around nests.

Jaikku: They look like they have gills underneath.

They are not puffball mushrooms but they are quite similar.

Jaikku: They are like puffballs, but they have a longer stem.

I think they grow in shady areas. I want to know why we have different names for them.

Jaikku: *Pujualutsait* are round.

Are pujualutsait different from pujualuit?

Aalasi: *Pujualuit* have a long stem.

Jaikku: They do not have a long stem. They touch the ground.

Akisu: They appear to touch the ground.

Jaikku: There is always a confusion between *pujualutsait*, *pujualuit* and *atungaujait*.

Aalasi: You can use *isurramuat*, mountain avens, for direction if you are lost on a windy day.

Akisu: After they freeze, they tend to droop from the north to the sea.

Aalasi: That is how you can tell which direction north is.

Akisu: We call *uannaq* the north wind.

Jaikku: The mountain avens looks twisted.

Aalasi: All grasses droop towards the north.

Jaikku: These plants are called mountain avens. They appear to have been twisted.

Drowning

What do we do when someone has fallen in the water and is no longer breathing?

Aalasi: I was given advice on how to help those who had fallen in the water. My brother-in-law's late father, Kakkik, and my late aunt told me that if someone fell in the water and was unconscious, you should position them so that they were draped over a rock. You had to make sure the person was facing towards the sea. No one was allowed to walk in front of them. You would just leave them alone and wait for them to come around. These days, everyone seems to rush about trying to get the person to start breathing. Sometimes I even think that there have been fatalities because of this. If you see foam coming out from the corner of the mouth, that means the drowned person is going to start breathing again. It could take up to an hour after the foam appeared before the person would start breathing. If there was foam there was reason for hope. That's what people used to say.

Jaikku: People could recover even if they had stopped breathing.

Aalasi: The person could recover even if they had stopped breathing. If there was foam at the corners of the mouth, it was a sign that they would recover. When their toes started twitching, you turned them over on to their side so that they could vomit. That is what people used to say.

Would they start breathing on their own?

Aalasi: Once they had vomited out the water they would start breathing on their own.

Jaikku: They would vomit out the water if their bodies had been placed properly on the rock with their head hanging down.

When the foam started coming out, were they not supposed to wipe it off?

Jaikku: You weren't supposed to wipe it.

No one was allowed to walk in front of the person?

Aalasi: Absolutely not. No one was allowed to walk in front. The person in charge could peek over to see if there was foam coming out, but not walk in front.

Jaikku: My grandfather Putuguk lived to be an old man. He drowned when he was young. He went down to the bottom, and was revived after that. He died much later of old age.

Aalasi: When they attempt to revive a person who has drowned by pressing down on their chests really hard, I think they just damage the heart. I am not saying that the *qallunaat* way is wrong, it is just the Inuit way worked.

Akisu: If a person has been placed on the rocks properly, the water and even the salt, could be vomited up from the lungs.

What was done with people who were breathing, but were suffering from hypothermia? Did you have to remove the clothing?

Aalasi: Don't pay attention to the clothing. I heard of two adults though, whose boots had to be removed because they were long.

Those who fell in the water but were still breathing; once they were out of the water, did you just remove their boots without taking them inside?

Jaikku: Once they had started breathing, then you took good care of them. You made sure that they were warm once they started breathing. That is how it was done. They warmed the body.

Aalasi: You gave them a small sip of warm water first.

Didn't they remove all their clothes and make sure their genitals and other openings were kept warm? Did they lay side by side with the victim to help keep them warm?

Aalasi: They could do that to someone who hadn't drowned. If someone was just suffering from hypothermia, you had to try and keep them warm. If a person is suffering from hypothermia and they are conscious, they should be lain with and brought to warmth.

Did you remove all their clothing?

Aalasi: Yes. You would remove the clothing.

Akisu: You would warm them up with body heat.

Jaikku: When someone had almost drowned and was suffering from hypothermia, you attempted to get the person warm right away. I have never experienced this first hand but I have heard about it.

This was the way we were. Everything was passed down orally. Inuit did not record information in writing but by passing it down orally. The information that we have is stored in our brains and our hearts. We have not forgotten what we have heard. We are taking about what we have been told.

Aalasi: We would not remember any of this if we hadn't been living in isolated camps. We did not live a fast life. While my mother would be sewing or when we were eating, she used to talk about how things should be done. We did not ask questions but we heard what was being said. I learned a lot just from listening to my aunt and my sister Mary's father-in-law, Kakkik, speaking.

Disinfectants and soaps

What was done if someone was losing a lot of blood?

Aalasi: If someone had a gunshot wound or fell and had a big cut, you would try to stem the blood flow. When a woman was losing too much blood after giving birth, she was given special care. If someone was losing a lot of blood the ring finger used to be tied. This made a big difference because the ring finger controls blood flow. Once it is tied, the bleeding stops right away if you are having a nosebleed. Gunshot wounds or large cuts would be tied at the affected arm or leg to prevent blood loss.

Jaikku: I have lost blood two ways, from a nosebleed and after delivering a baby. I always lost a lot of blood from delivering a child. I used to be fed broth which is good for the blood, as well as water.

Aalasi: Seal broth is really good for blood loss. Fish broth is also good.

If someone had broken their finger on a rock did you tie it first and then apply a bandaid?

Aalasi: If it was cut, the bandaid was applied after the bleeding slowed down. We all peed into a container and the urine was used to soak the wound to stop the bleeding.

Akisu: That was done if it was bleeding very heavily. Urine made the wound burn, but it would stop the bleeding if the wound was immersed in urine.

I guess it is like the disinfectants they use now on large wounds.

Aalasi: Urine was not only used for cuts. It was also used for washing. It is really good for removing stains.

Akisu: If the clothing was rinsed properly, you couldn't even smell the urine.

Aalasi: I have seen both urine and eider duck eggs being used as soap.

Jaikku: Sealskins that have had fish wrapped in them come out looking bleached.

Aalasi: My mother would put the insides of a fish in a parka cover and squish them inside. After she rinsed them out, the parka was really clean. *Nigguq*, the slippery top part on the fish skin, is also good.

Does it look like saliva?

Aalasi: Yes. *Nigguq* used to work very well. When we were really poor we used it for soap.

Did you ever use polar bear broth for washing?

Aalasi: No, I never did that.

Jaikku: There were never many polar bears. When there were we just wanted to eat them.

I mean the broth left over from boiled meat.

Jaikku: I've never heard of that being used for washing. I just think of it as food. My mother used clay for soap. I would get it from the beach for her. Clay is excellent because it doesn't have any sand in it.

Aalasi: There are different types of clay.

Jaikku: Yes. Clay from the beach and clay from the land are different. I used to collect clay from the beach for my mother so she could use it for soap. I also collected eggs for her. There was no way eggs would be thrown out. They would be saved for soap. The part of the fish which is saliva-like, was also used for soap.

Aalasi: We spent long periods of time without contact with the *qallunaat* when we were on the other side of Pangniqtuuq. We used to wash our hair with seal blood. It was like shampoo. Once it was rinsed out, the hair was so clean it was glossy.

Did you ever try washing your hair with caribou blood?

Aalasi: We grew up in an area where there was hardly any caribou so I never tried it.

Jaikku: I would think caribou blood would be good because it can be easily removed when it is on cloth. Other animal's blood is harder to remove. It is not like caribou blood at all.

Was clay used for healing purposes?

Aalasi: My mother used to wrap clay in cloth, heat it and apply it on an ache or pain. She made sure the clay was not too sandy. It was really good for that.

Jaikku: Clay was really useful. I have a supply of clay from Aggauti that I use for cleaning. It is the same type of clay that my mother used. I did the floor recently. It removes stains really easily.

Akisu: The branches from blueberry bushes are really good for removing *puja*, gummy blubber. It removes what ordinary soaps cannot.

Did you just rub the branches on whatever you wanted to clean?

Akisu: Yes. For example if there was *puja* inside a pot, it would remove it. It works really well. I have used it often.

Slings, splints, and scalpels

If someone had a broken collar bone, how did you treat it?

Aalasi: They were given slings. I myself have broken my collar bone three times.

Jaikku: The place where I first broke my collar bone is just another joint now because I did not wear a sling. It never completely healed. When I broke my collar bone on the other side, even though there is a slight lump, it healed properly. Collar bones that are broken are treated with a sling. They do not take very long to heal although they are very painful at first.

Young boys tend to be very hyperactive. Were they required to use slings too?

Aalasi: My mother used slings with boys too, so that the bone would not move around. It healed faster that way.

I think if my son ever needed a sling he would take it off, because he is so active. What is the name for a sling?

Aalasi: It is called an *ikusimmik* because it was worn around the elbow.

Why did people have boils so often back then?

Aalasi: I do not know why. They used to be really big.

Jaikku: Maybe the germs in our skin turn into boils. I think there are fewer now because we have been immunized. I used to have boils very often back then.

Aalasi: Boils used to be cut open with a small sharp blade.

Jaikku: I told you about the incision I had to make once when I was delivering a baby. The blade to cut open a boil was similar to the one I used for that.

Aalasi: We always had a blade like that available for an emergency, even though it wasn't used on a regular basis. They were small blades, like scalpels. Nail clippers were always kept handy; the same was done with this blade.

What did you apply on the boil?

Aalasi: A lemming skin was used.

Akisu: It was used after you drained the abscess.

Aalasi: The lemming skin pulled out the eye of the boil, the *inualua*. The only way a boil can heal is if the eye comes out. If it does not come out, the boil tends to reappear elsewhere.

Akisu: The round white eye would pop.

Did you put anything on the lemming skin?

Aalasi: The lemming skin itself was sufficient.

Jaikku: You would wet it a bit before applying it, and it would suck out the abscess.

Jaikku: I had to cut open someone who had an infection on his wrist. I could feel an abscess deep inside so I applied a paste of molasses mixed with Sunlight soap. I put some of that on, and applied a lemming skin as a bandaid to suck up the abscess.

I don't know if I quite understood. Did you apply the skin side or the fur side of the lemming skin to the abscess?

Aalasi: I applied the skin side. If we ran out we could go to other camp members to get lemming skins because they were kept as supplies. In the same way we keep pills now, we would keep lemming skins for when we needed them.

Would the lemming skin come off itself after the boil started to heal?

Aalasi: The lemming skin was checked regularly to see if the abscess had come up.

Jaikku: When the edge of the lemming skin started to dry up, it was removed and changed.

Aalasi: Just like dressings are changed today.

Jaikku: The thin fur from the stomach area of rabbits was also kept. It was never thrown out. It was saved so that it could be used when needed. The same was true for lemming skins. Lemming skins were excellent for healing wounds. You only stopped applying them when it looked like the wound was completely healed.

How was pain dealt with before there was medication? Today we take pills for headaches.

Aalasi: We used a band which we tied on our heads; even that was shared amongst camp members. You could also apply something cold. We have always been aware of that.

Jaikku: If someone had a nosebleed for too long, snow or ice was applied.

Aalasi: The band used to be fetched from my aunt's place, I remember that very well.

Did the headache go away quickly?

Aalasi: Yes, it did not take too long. A person who was sick in bed was well taken care of. We would move them around to make them comfortable and give them whatever they asked for.

Jaikku: If a sick person was no longer eating, we would ask them what they desired and then get them whatever they had requested. If what they had asked for was not available, we would go out and hunt for it. The person would eventually get better. The sick were very well taken care of. The idea was to get their appetite going.

Aalasi: A sick person was also brought food from nearby camps. People would look for ways to help the sick person feel better. It worked too. A sick person would be taken outside during the spring and summer. Sometimes a tent would be set up for them so they would be in a relaxing atmosphere. Even that helped. They would do anything to make the person feel better. It was very helpful to take them outside for short periods of time when the weather was good.

Jaikku: If a person was sick for an extended period of time, they would make sure they spent some time outside.

Aalasi: They tried different ways to help them feel better. Sometimes their hair would be trimmed. Sometimes they would cut it really short to see if that would make them feel better.

If a person had headaches often, would their hair be cut?

Aalasi: That was also very helpful.

That was done to me when I had frequent headaches. My hair was cut and I wore a band. It seemed to help.

Aalaasi: Yes, those things do make a difference.

Jaikku: I have cut my hair many times. It does seem to work. You feel better afterwards.

Aalasi: There used to be different types of sicknesses that we had to deal with. Back then we didn't have material to make casts for broken bones. We used dried bearded seal or ringed sealskin. Wood was used if it was available.

Jaikku: You would just make sure whatever you were using was stiff. If there was no wood available, bearded sealskin was the best to use.

Aalasi: The skin would be bound with rope.

Akisu: Inuapik from Iqaluit broke her thigh when she was out sliding and they used pieces of wood as a splint.

Jaikku: That is why she limps slightly.

Would the bearded sealskin be tied on?

Aalasi: Yes, it would be tied on. It would be bound to the leg or to the arm.

Akisu: Inuapik's sister was sliding with her. She was trying to get her to stand up but she kept on crying. It turned out the bone was broken.

Aalasi: We never thought that a person wouldn't recover from a broken bone. When we were living outside of Pangniqtuuq there was a person who had fallen and broken his

back, but he hadn't damaged his spinal cord. A tent pole was bound to his back for support. He was like that for almost a year before he recovered. There was no such thing as x-rays back then. People did not know exactly what had happened to him, but they used a support for his back to keep it straight. He lived for a long time after that.

How did he manage to sleep?

Aalasi: He found a way to sleep.

Jaikku: They would find a position they were comfortable in to sleep. They were well taken care of.

Aalasi: We didn't have an abundance of household items back then.

Jaikku: We did not keep anything that we couldn't use. All we had was our clothing and our bedding. We would make what we needed.

Aalasi: When I was visiting the hospital recently I noticed that the bedding they use looks really uncomfortable. The bed itself is really hard. Back then when a person was sick, caribou bedding was given to them if they did not have enough in their dwelling. The bedding at the hospital should be made more comfortable. I am sure the sick feel worse with that bedding.

Jaikku: There are some tenants in our building who are wheelchair-bound. Their chairs have no extra padding. They sit on them day in and day out. My heart really goes out to them.

Aalasi: Yes, they are sitting all day on the same seat. It never changes. We used to try and position the sick in a comfortable position.

They must get tired of having their limbs hanging all the time.

Aalasi: Very much so.

Jaikku: They do not even have any way to stretch their legs out. The chairs they use day in and day out are just ordinary wheel chairs. Something should to be done about this. Those who cannot walk are forced to remain in the same position all day. They do not even get a chance to stretch their legs.

Aalasi: Broken bones were bound with stiff materials and the bones used to heal. I know of a person who had a spinal injury and a neck injury. When the neck is injured, and the person is no longer able to twist or turn it, it is called *tummaqtuq*.

Lice

What did they do about lice back then?

Aalasi: I really liked lice. I really miss them, especially the nits.

Jaikku: We used to have a lot of lice.

Aalasi: We had so many lice that my head used to be full of nits.

What did you do to get rid of them?

Aalasi: My head was combed with a fine-tooth comb. After this was done there would be so many lice on the snow that the snow turned black.

You must have been very itchy.

Aalasi: Once I could not sleep at all after I had given birth. I was so itchy, I went for a walk. I was afraid my in-laws would search for the lice. I took my top off as well as my pants and whacked them on solid rock. I was doing this as quickly as I could because it was late at night. I had a good sleep after I did that to my clothing and the lice were gone. After I got rid of the lice I was even told that I didn't look pale anymore. When I shook my head lice fell out. People who had too many lice lost a lot of blood as their blood was being sucked.