

*Report of research activities and findings:
Kangiqsujuaq food and environment research project*

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This document describes the results of research conducted in Kangiqsujuaq on household food security, country food access, food sharing networks and country food harvesting activities since 2013.

Objectives of the research program

This project focused on the following questions about the importance of traditional foods to Inuit food security and well-being and the potential impact of climate change on country food access:

- How do weather conditions and economic factors impact hunting decisions and harvests?
- How does food sharing relate to food security and other measures of social well-being?

So far, I have focused on answering the second question, examining the importance of harvesting and food sharing to Inuit social and economic life today. Over the next two to three years, I plan to start working on the data I have already collected to provide answers to the first question.

By answering these questions, this project will contribute to a better understanding of how climate change is affecting subsistence harvesting and country food sharing, of the sources of food insecurity in the community, and of how country food sharing supports food security and social relationships in the community. This information could assist Kangiqsujuarmit by:

- Providing evidence of the need for additional programs to support access to country food and to promote food security in the community
- Providing information useful for the management of programs to support country food access and food security, such as the Hunter Support Program.

Project approvals

The Stanford University IRB (Institutional Review Board) provided the initial ethics review and approval for this research. Ongoing analysis of the information collected has been approved by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln IRB.



The author conducted this research as part of her PhD dissertation work at Stanford University. She is now a Postdoctoral Research Associate at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Contact: eready@ualberta.net

Prior to conducting the research, I consulted with the Kangiqsujuaq Northern Village council and signed a research agreement with the mayor. Funding for the research was provided by the National Science Foundation Office of Polar Programs.

To protect research participants, pseudonyms (fake names) are used for all individuals mentioned in my publications.

Data collection

Data was collected in Kangiqsujuaq between August 2013 and July 2014. During that time, I lived with a family in Kangiqsujuaq and participated in community life to the fullest extent possible, including following along on hunting and camping trips, taking Inuktitut lessons, attending community events of all types, and volunteering and occasionally substitute teaching at the school. The data I collected included:

- A household survey about household demographics, economics, food security, subsistence participation, and food sharing. I interviewed a total of 110 Inuit households and 28 non-Inuit households for this survey.
- Bi-weekly interviews about harvesting and sharing activities with a group of approximately 10 households over the course of 9 months.
- Observing hunts and interviewing hunters about their hunting activities, including collecting GPS tracks of hunting trips.
- Informal interviews and conversations with elders and hunters about the environment, hunting, sharing, and other changes during their lifetimes.

Several research assistants, including students in the Secondary Six program, assisted me with data collection for the survey. All the research assistants received basic training in research procedures and ethics.

Data management and ownership

Because the research was collected as part of a project funded by the National Science Foundation, the data from this project is “owned” by Stanford University. However, I am responsible for curating the data and I have the sole authority to determine access to it.

One of the key priorities of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami’s recent *National Inuit Strategy on Research* is for Inuit to gain control over research data collected in Inuit communities. The Nunavik Research Council (NRC) is currently working on establishing a procedure for licensing and permitting social science research in Nunavik. This

plan will include regulations pertaining to data ownership and management. Once this new policy is established, I propose to bring my data into compliance with the new regulations and if possible transfer ownership of the data to the NRC or the appropriate organization.

Results of research

The results of the research so far have been presented in several different forms, including scientific publications, opinion pieces and policy reports, presentations at universities and academic conferences, and presentations and documents made for the local community. I summarize each of these here.

Return of results to community

I have presented my results to the community on several occasions:

- **DURING FIELDWORK.** While working in the community, I made regular radio announcements about my activities. This included a radio show at the end of my fieldwork that summarized what I did and included a raffle for participants and accordion music.
- **INITIAL SUMMARY REPORT OF THE RESULTS.** In May 2015, I returned to Kangiqsujuaq to present my results to the Northern Village (NV) Council and Landholding Board of Directors. This presentation included a brief summary report of my initial results in English and Inuktitut.¹ I also spoke in person with several research participants about the results of my work.
- **UPDATES ON ONGOING WORK.** In May 2018, I returned to Kangiqsujuaq to update the NV Council and other community members on the research results, including sharing this document, and to seek direction from community members for future work.

Scientific publications

Table 1 lists the peer-reviewed publications that have resulted from this research so far, and provides a summary of the main conclusions of each paper.

Copies of the articles published to-date have been provided to the NRC in Kuujuaq, and I have also shared them with officials at Makivik and the Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services. Copies of all publications will also be made available in Kangiqsujuaq.

All of the papers that have been published so far have been based on my PhD dissertation for Stanford University. I would be happy to

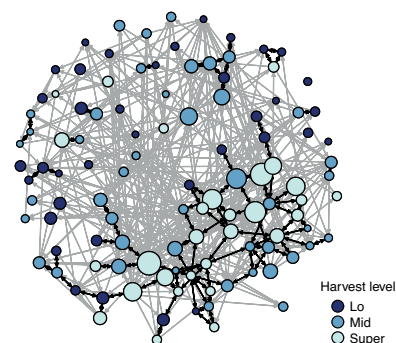


Figure 1: Kangiqsujuaq country food sharing network, showing one-way sharing ties between households in grey and two-way sharing ties in black. The circles represent households and are coloured by country food harvest level.

¹ This report can be downloaded here: https://elspethr.github.io/research_summary.pdf.

provide an electronic copy of my dissertation to anyone who would like to see it in addition to the published articles.

Publication	Key results
Ready, E. (2016). Challenges in the assessment of Inuit food security. <i>Arctic</i> 69(3): 266–280.	41% of Kangiqsjuarmiut have low or very low food security. A similar proportion of community members were food insecure in 2004 and 2014, but the severity of food insecurity appears to have increased. Kangiqsjuarmiut are also very concerned about their access to country food, partially because of the high cost of harvest equipment and supplies, but also because of the sometimes unpredictable nature of hunting. For these reasons, standard research tools do not adequately capture some of the more complex aspects of Inuit food security.
Ready, E. and Power, E. (2018). Why wage-earners hunt: Food sharing, social structure, and influence in an arctic mixed economy. <i>Current Anthropology</i> 59(1): 74–97.	Inuit households benefit from sharing for many different reasons, partly because they have different economic characteristics (e.g., employed vs. unemployed hunters). Reciprocity (giving back to those who shared with you) is very important, and is especially apparent among hunters. Sharing is also closely connected to leadership in the community: people from households that share generously are more likely to hold elected positions. However, although sharing helps redistribute resources, economic inequality is relatively high in the community. Sharing is beneficial but does not solve the underlying problem of unequal and insufficient access to economic opportunities in the community.
Ready, E. (2018). Sharing-based social capital associated with harvest production and wealth in the Canadian Arctic. <i>PLoS ONE</i> 13(3): e1093759.	Households with greater need for food (due to poverty, not being a hunter, or having a large household size) do not tend to have more protective country food sharing network structures surrounding them than households with less food need. However, elders and single women do tend to have larger sharing networks. Nevertheless, productive hunters likely have the most resilient food sharing networks.
Ready, E. (In press). Who, being loved, is poor? Poverty, marriage, and changing family structures in the Canadian Arctic. <i>Human Organization</i> 77(2).	35% of households in Kangiqsjuuaq are headed by single women, mostly single mothers. Employment and participation in traditional harvesting and sharing contribute to this pattern, as individuals with more full-time employment and men who are hunters are more likely to be in married or common-law relationships. High unemployment in the community therefore has consequences for personal relationships, mental health, and the transmission of traditional knowledge.
Ready, E. (Accepted). Why subsistence matters. <i>Hunter-Gatherer Research</i> .	This paper summarizes the major conclusions of the previous papers, arguing how harvesting and sharing remain critical to social, political, and economic life for Inuit today, but also considering some potential threats to the persistence of traditional harvesting and sharing. These particularly include the high prevalence of poverty, which limit the livelihood choices available to some community members, including their ability to engage in harvesting and sharing and to enjoy its benefits.

Table 1: Peer-reviewed journal articles published or in press.

Media coverage, policy and opinion pieces

Table 2 summarizes opinion pieces, policy reports, and blog posts that I have written relating to this research project.

Report	Summary
Ready, E. (2015). Ensuring country food access for a food secure future in Nunavik. In <i>Québec policy on the Arctic: Challenges and Perspectives</i> , Arctic and International Relations Series, Issue 1, pp. 50–54.	Report on food security in Nunavik submitted to the Quebec government as part of a series of policy reports. In my report, I emphasized the need to not only implement improved training and employment programs and cost-of-living reductions, but also the need to improve financial support for hunters and to provide more opportunities for Inuit youth to learn traditional skills.
Ready, E. (2016). Letter to the Editor. <i>Maclean's</i> , November 26, 2016.	Response to obituary of Yaaka Yaaka. In my letter, I wanted to publicly thank Yaaka for his enormous contribution to my research and bring attention to his dedication to youth and to the environment, in order to emphasize the need for additional support for the kinds of programs he established.
Ready, E. (2018). Sharing has many benefits for Inuit but poverty presents real challenges. http://reach-lab.org/2018/03/19/sharing-has-many-benefits-for-inuit-but-poverty-presents-real-challenges/	Response to an article about my research in the newspaper <i>The National Post</i> .
Ready, E. and Collings, P. (2018). Rethinking “Big Problems” in Arctic health. <i>Anthropology News Online</i> . http://www.anthropology-news.org/index.php/2018/01/24/rethinking-big-problems-in-arctic-health/	Based on our experience living and working in Inuit communities, my colleague Peter Collings and I argue that Arctic health research might more effectively address some of the persistent health problems in Inuit communities by focusing on identifying mechanisms that could link culture change and colonialism with health. In particular, we suggest that health research should pay attention to the different kinds of stress that Inuit experience and what behaviours they use cope with it.

Table 2: Opinion pieces, policy reports and other research products.

Presentations

Since 2014, I haven given conference talks or poster presentations about my research at six professional anthropology conferences, and I have won awards for two of these presentations. I have given invited lectures on my work at Stanford University (Stanford, California), the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (Lincoln, Nebraska), the University of California Berkeley (Berkeley, California), Simon Fraser University (Vancouver, B.C.), Arizona State University (Tempe, Arizona), the Santa Fe Institute (Santa Fe, New Mexico) and the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology (Leipzig, Germany). I also regularly give guest lectures in university classes.

I view all of my presentations as a chance to educate the audience about contemporary Inuit lifeways, especially the continued importance of traditional cultural practices like harvesting country food and sharing it, and increase awareness of some of the challenges faced by Inuit today as a result of colonialism and climate change.

Most of the audiences I speak to, especially university students in the United States, have very limited knowledge of Inuit people and culture.

Practical implications of results

Based on the results of this research, I would suggest several possible ways to enhance food security, country food access, and sharing that could be implemented at the local level:

- Enhance access to equipment for harvesting. Providing skidoos and other harvesting equipment for rent or for purchase at subsidized prices for low-income harvesters could help more people participate in hunting and sharing.
- Enhance access to education in traditional land skills. Many young Inuit do not have role models in their families who are available to teach them traditional land skills. One way to do this might be to provide incentives for hunters to take youth (not just their own children) with them on hunting trips.
- Encourage sharing beyond immediate family members, single mothers, and elders. In particular, encourage sharing with families with young children, people without jobs, and people who have few relatives in the community.
- Improve the operation of the Community Freezer so that it gets food to the people who need it most on a regular basis. When I conducted my interviews, many food insecure community members felt that it was too hard to get food at the community freezer because it disappeared so quickly and was unpredictable.

The broad impacts of subsistence participation and sharing shown in this research suggest that improving access to country food and increasing participation in harvesting and sharing would likely have spill-over effects into other aspects of social well-being and physical and mental health in the community.

Increasing employment opportunities that are compatible with family life in the community is also extremely important. Developing hunting as a paid vocation is one possibility that should be investigated. Finally, it is important to continue to expand cost-of-living reductions at the regional level. Again, measures to include subsidies on snowmobiles and harvesting equipment for low-income households could be very beneficial.

Future plans

The work for this research project is ongoing. My objectives for the near future include:

- Continuing to work on the analysis of the data that I have already collected, to answer the other research questions that motivated this project (about the relationship between hunting, sharing, and climate change).
- Consulting with the community to establish additional goals and priorities relating to this research and possible future projects.

Acknowledgments

This research would not have been possible without the help and support of hundreds of people in Kangiqsujuaq and beyond. I cannot name everyone who has contributed to this project, but I would particularly like to recognize Yaaka Yaaka who I met on my first trip to Kangiqsujuaq in 2011 and who motivated me to return to work in the community, as well as Amanda Annahatak who helped conduct the majority of the household surveys.

*Nakurmimarialuk
Kangiqsujuarmit!*