



The village of Kangiqsujuaq, with its 800 inhabitants, lies in the far north of Quebec. For the Inuit who live there, hunting and sharing food are still important today.

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Max Planck researchers cooperate with partners in more than 120 countries. In these articles, they talk about their personal experiences and impressions. Elspeth Ready from the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig regularly travels to the Canadian Arctic for research. She tells of magnificent expanses, special culinary delights, and an icy dog sled ride.

The village of Kangiqsujuaq has 800 inhabitants and is located in Nunavik, in the far north of Quebec. To get there, you take a flight from Montreal to Kuujuaq, where you change to a smaller plane, filled with passengers and cargo, that stops at several towns along the Hudson Strait coast. The trip from Kuujuaq usually takes half a day, but it's important to be patient and keep your plans flexible because

flights are often delayed due to bad weather, sometimes for several days.

I first visited Kangiqsujuaq in 2011 with a team of archaeologists. We worked on documenting semi-subterranean houses just a few kilometers away from the modern village. The houses were occupied for hundreds of years by both Inuit and Tuniiit, a population who lived in the region before Inuit arrived. After that first summer, I kept returning to Kangiqsujuaq and, motivated by my experiences and conversations with hunters, developed a research project focused on the role of hunting and food sharing in food security in Inuit communities.

Over the past century, Inuit have experienced extreme changes in their way of life. Many elders were born in igloos or tents and lived on the land until they were told by government officials to move to the village in the 1960s. Today, Inuit live in permanent

houses and buy food and materials in shops, but the local language and cultural practices like hunting and food sharing are still strong. Nevertheless, the changes have not been easy. One of my current research projects, in collaboration with the local community council, focuses on experiences of stress and stress management strategies in the community.

During my last stay in Kangiqsujuaq, I lived in a small teacher's apartment that was free during the school holidays. In the morning, I usually write field notes and then conduct interviews in the afternoons. In the evenings, I often go visiting at the homes of my Inuit friends. Visitors are sometimes invited to eat, and a variety of local foods—like caribou, seal, beluga whales, geese, and grouse—might be served. My personal favorite is Arctic char. It tastes a lot like salmon, but much better! I especially like it dried with Montreal steak seasoning.



## KANGIQSUJUAQ, CANADA

Traditional foods are an important source of nutrients and vitamins for Inuit today. Fresh foods are rare at the supermarkets in Kangiqsujuaq. Rice, pasta, and other nonperishable goods are delivered by cargo ship during the summer. Some fresh fruits and vegetables arrive weekly by plane, but are very expensive and soon out of stock. Traditional foods are also widely shared, and this sharing brings families and the wider community closer together.

Because much of my research focuses on traditional foods, I try to go along on hunting and fishing trips whenever I get the chance, so I can learn about what local food production involves. I can drive a snowmobile and I try to be helpful wherever I can – for instance, lending a hand in butchering a whale.

Being out on the land in the Arctic is an uplifting feeling for me. The land-

scape is vast, and the sense of freedom is indescribable. In Germany I am often asked how I cope with the darkness of the Arctic winter, but I grew up in Canada, so as a child, I was used to going to school and coming home in the dark. In fact, I often find the German winter much more oppressive: everything is gray and the sky is full of clouds. In the Arctic, the sky is usually clear, and you can see the moon and the stars, and the snow makes everything bright.

Once, I had the opportunity to go on a dog sled trip with friends who were training for an annual sled race. For seven hours we travelled across the snowy tundra and sea ice to a small cabin where we spent the night, then back again the next day. During the several hours of sledding at minus 25 degrees Celsius, I got frostbite on my nose, but my Inuit companions noticed it quickly before it got too bad. Fortunately, it has healed well!



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Elspeth Ready

36 is Canadian and studied anthropology at the University of Alberta and Trent University. After completing her Ph. D. at Stanford University, she moved to the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig at the beginning of 2019. Together with her team, she studies how traditional foods support food security, well-being, and resilience to climate change in Inuit communities.