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Pond Inlet: Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit of Narwhal

Let's start with who you are and where you are from.

I am Siatie Tagaaq, I'm from Pond Inlet. I've been living in Pond Inlet since 1960 when we moved here from our camp.

Here near Pond Inlet, have you noticed the difference of forming of the ice and landfast ice now compared to before?

Siatie: Yes, back then it used to be really cold according to what I remember the ice used to be thicker during the winter but now it is a lot thinner and the ice is forming later.

The landfast ice used to be thicker?

Siatie: Yes it used to be a lot thicker, and it was not soft that is how it used to be.

Have you noticed any changes in the migration of the narwhal?

I have noticed now, for example our narwhal now arrive later here in Pond Inlet we used to have lots of narwhal when they were migrating south and north but now I've noticed that they are not passing through as much.

The migration when they first arrive near Pond Inlet has that changed?

Siatie: Yes, the change is obvious as I mentioned they used to pass through Pond Inlet they don't do that as much now when they are on their way to their feeding grounds and calving areas.

The people from Pond Inlet when they go narwhal hunting, has that changed too?

Siatie: Our hunting habits have changed for example we have to go way up there to hunt narwhal because they don't pass through here anymore.

Where do the narwhal go to have their calves?

Siatie: According to what I know since I found out they go up to the estuary of Qurluqtuq in Eclipse Sound they go up there to have their calves since I've known they still go up there.

Of course people still go up there to hunt near the calving areas?

Siatie: Of course that is always happening also just recently they observed the hunters hunting while the narwhal were giving birth up there during the summer as that is the area where the calves are born.

Do you know where the narwhal go?

Siatie: That seems to be obvious they go to the areas where there is open water between Greenland and here and they also go off Cumberland Sound where there is open water.

What about the number of narwhal, are there changes every year?

Siatie: There used to be lots of narwhal when we lived in our camp over at Nulluat, they passed through for several hours, it is still like that when they are together but now it is obvious that they are dispersing. Some have gone towards Clyde River in the inlet also some have gone up to what we call Iqaluit, Aulattivik, Qurluqtuq when they are together but there are still a lot of narwhal.

Looking at the last ten years that has really changed?

Siatie: From back then yes, it has really changed.

Those that come near Pond Inlet today are they all together or do they come at different times?

Siatie: They seem to be in different groups back then the adult males used to arrive first on their way to the summering area but now they don't pass through as often now we see more yearlings.

What about during the fall when they start migrating south are they all together or in separate groups?

Siatie: Right now for example perhaps starting last year or the year before we got narwhal that we usually don't get maybe they came from the Grise Fiord or Lancaster Sound area the narwhal we get now.

You mentioned the Lancaster Sound narwhal are their characteristics different from the narwhal from Pond Inlet?

Siatie: Yes, they are different, the ones from there maybe because they were not used to being hunted they are not shy when we go after them, but here

because they are used to being hunted if there are no killer whales around they are hard to get.

Do you have anything else to add that I did not ask or say?

Siatie: I don't have much to say but I want to say that it is obvious today that the narwhal tend to get entrapped in ice here that has happened twice now in Pond Inlet. It seems that the narwhal stay up there longer for some reason, perhaps staying away from the ships or killer whales. They take longer to migrate, even now it is fall they are still up there, that is obvious.

You mentioned that there are ice entrapments, we hear that they are doing seismic blasting off Greenland. Does that seem to be the reason why the narwhal stay here longer?

Siatie: Yes, I believe that when they are doing seismic blasting the marine mammals will go as far away from it as possible. I believe that is part of the reason.

Thank you for allowing me to ask you about narwhal.

Siatie: Thank you also.

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To start with can you say where you are from?

Aisa Kunnak of Pond Inlet.

Here in Pond Inlet, from what you know, do you think the ice has changed?

Aisa: No, I haven't noticed anything about the ice.

What about when the ice is forming and the thickness, have you noticed it?

Aisa: I enjoy it when the ice is forming.

Does it seem to form later now?

Aisa: From what I remember I don't think so, as I am used to living in a camp the ice in Pond Inlet is different from our old camp.

What was it like over there when the ice was forming?

Aisa: When we started traveling by snowmobile to cross the bay they were still boating in Pond Inlet.

When you lived in a camp where were you?

Aisa: At Nulluat.

Are the characteristics of narwhal different from one another?

Aisa: I don't know, I don't think so, I don't see any difference.

The movements of the narwhal are the same from what you've seen?

Aisa: There seem to be less narwhal this year compared to last year that is all I've noticed.

Has that seem to have changed in Pond Inlet when you are hunting narwhal?

Aisa: It seems to be like that as the narwhal are few around Pond Inlet.

From when you lived in a camp compared to today has the migration of narwhal during spring and fall changed?

Aisa; Yes, during the spring it seems to be like that as there were not many at the floe edge this pass spring.

What about during the fall are there changes in the narwhal here?

Aisa: During this fall?

Yes, during the fall.

Aisa: Yes, they usually pass through they didn't pass through all summer. They came through when the ice was gone but there were none all summer.

Do you know where the narwhal go to have their calves?

Aisa: In Eclipse Sound and where the graves are those are the only ones I know.

People also hunt there?

Aisa: Yes, they usually go there to hunt narwhal.

Do you know where the narwhal go to spend the winter?

Aisa: No, I really don't know that.

The numbers of narwhal when they start arriving every year has that changed?

Aisa: Yes, to me it seems to have changed. When I was a boy there used to be lots but now there are not as many even though there are still a lot of them.

Looking at the last ten years from 2006 to now the change is obvious?

Aisa: It seems to be like that when the ships start passing through that seems to have changed.

Does the ships seem to have an effect when there are more that are passing through?

Aisa: Yes, they seem to have an effect because the ships are going through their traditional path, maybe they hear them through the water, I don't know. That seems to be the reason why there are few narwhal.

You mentioned this a bit, can you elaborate on the migration during spring and fall. Are there lots or do the narwhal come in groups when they come through?

Aisa: They seem to come in smaller groups when they pass through from what I know.

What about during the fall do they come at the same or in groups?

Aisa: Yes, they seem to come in groups, they stay around feeding in small groups during the fall.

What about the appearances, are the narwhal all the same or are there different ones?

Aisa: I now think there are differences in narwhal. The black ones are larger that did not come here often before but now they come around. They are a lot bigger and are all black.

And the ones near Pond Inlet are they different narwhal that are smaller in size?

Aisa: Yes, our narwhal are smaller compared to the narwhal in Qaanaaq which are larger.

Do you have anything else to say that I did not ask about narwhal?

Aisa: No, I don't have anything else to say.

Thank you for letting me ask you questions.

Aisa: Yes.

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Can you say who you are and where you live?

Lee Inuaraq of Pond Inlet.

Thank you, have you noticed, here near Pond Inlet, if the thickness of the landfast ice changed?

Lee: I have noticed that the multi-year ice are not around anymore. About two years ago when there were multi-year ice it took longer for the ice to break up. Now this past spring we did not have multi-year ice the ice break up was sooner.

What about when the ice is forming is that noticeable?

Lee: It is different every year, sometimes it forms earlier other times it takes longer to form when it is windy and maybe the current is strong so it takes longer.

What about the movements of narwhal and the characteristics has that changed near Pond Inlet?

Lee: I think so because they are wildlife that are aware, those we hunt some people go after the ones with tusks others go after the ones with good muktaaq. Those that are hunted for their tusks are adult males, because they know they don't come near and I've seen when they try to get away from killer whales...they go near the shore during the summer, before they would go near the ships when killer whales were around they don't do that anymore.

That also has an effect when there are more ships?

Lee: Yes, very much, in the past maybe in the 1990s or early 2000s when we were up in Qammaq when there was a ship they would go near the shore but now when there is a ship they don't come near the shore as much even when they are trying to get away they don't come near the shore.

Are the narwhal hunts in Pond Inlet different today?

Lee: Yes, they are difficult to get but hearing stories from the older people they were easy to hunt one person said that when the motors became available and were used to hunt narwhal the narwhal would get stuck in shallow water.

It is different now?

Lee: Yes, it is different now because the narwhal have learned they are hard to get even when we try to herd them towards shallow water they are hard to get.

Has the migration of narwhal changed during spring and fall?

Lee: Not very much, they go through their traditional path, now that fall is approaching they will pass through here as they do every year during the fall.

Do you know where the narwhal have their calves?

Lee: I really don't know, they have their calves anytime during spring and maybe during the summer that is what I think because we see new borns during the spring and summer and at the floe edge as well as where we go hunting narwhal. Because we don't see them during the winter I am not sure if they have calves then.

Are there hunts in those areas?

Lee: Yes, of course, when they are trying to get muktaaq as well as caching the meat to have during the winter they do go to the calving areas to hunt.

Do you also know where the narwhal go to spend the winter?

Lee: I really don't know where they go maybe where there is open water, maybe in Baffin Bay, I think the ice doesn't form down there. Down where we go hunting on the floe edge we don't see them during the winter, but they are there during the spring.

What about when they arrive every year, do you know if the numbers have changed?

Lee: Somewhat they are different, sometime ago I noticed in 2009, there were maybe around 1020 narwhal that were fewer than usual. Where we go hunting narwhal now there seem to be more narwhal during the summer, some hunting in other areas say there are lots of narwhal as well as others who are

elsewhere say there are lots of narwhal but when we went up Eclipse Sound there seemed to be less narwhal even though there are some.

During the spring when they come near Pond Inlet do they come all at the same time or in smaller groups that arrive at different times?

Lee: During the spring?

Yes.

Lee: I don't think they are all together the ones I've noticed some just pass through here. Just before the ice breakup there are lots at the floe edge that are trying to go to the inlets. They arrive in large numbers during the spring when we start seeing them some just pass through just before the ice breakup.

What about during the fall?

Lee: There are lots of them during the fall that pass through there are also others we don't see as they leave the area right away, some do stay around.

What about the characteristics of narwhal? Their behaviour?

Lee: How different?

Their migration or size of the narwhal, those.

Lee: Yes, I think they are different, some go over there some around Arctic Bay there are also some in Kitikmeot. I noticed last year maybe the narwhal were from there that came through I am saying what I think. I think they were narwhal from there that came through during the fall in October or the end of September. The narwhal arrived and they pass through near the shore in Pond Inlet they were easy to get maybe because they were not used to being hunted. Here our narwhal because we hunt them they have gotten smart and are hard to get.

Do you have anything else to say that I did not ask or mentioned about narwhal?

Lee: I don't think so.

Thank you for letting me question you.

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First of all can you say who you are and where you are from?

Caleb Sangoya from Pond Inlet.

Here in Pond Inlet have you noticed the thickness of the ice, the formation of the ice and if that has changed?

Caleb: It changes, it's always different every year but back in the 1990s, 1987 normal conditions are occurring what I noticed when the puddles formed on top of the ice, it occurred the second time...some areas especially around the points where the currents are stronger and are dangerous some areas were thick that happened. After that what I have noticed is the puddles don't form the second time anymore. The breakup of the ice and forming of the ice sooner is different every year now. The ice is forming later maybe the ice will form earlier sometime in the future. Over there on the other side the ice forms earlier up to now the ice over there...when it gets cold the ice forms earlier here in our bay, if it doesn't get cold early the ice forms later that is happening now, it will be different if it gets cold earlier.

That is different every year?

Caleb: It doesn't happen all the time. No one can say that the ice will form at this time. When the multi-year ice from up north arrive early the ice will form earlier.

What about the differences in narwhal their characteristics are they all the same or are there differences?

Caleb: They are different every year the ones that come here. The ones I see up there since I've going there for 16 years they are different every year. Sometimes they arrive earlier other times they arrive later following the navigable water when they are on their way there. Sometimes when the ice in Pond Inlet hasn't shifted, the marine water up there is already ice free. Even when the ice is gone they take longer to arrive when over there behind us if the ice is still there. If the ice doesn't start moving soon they take longer to get here if it starts moving sooner they arrive earlier.

Can you say the name of the place when you say up there?

Caleb: Saviit, which is called Milne Inlet up there towards Trembley Sound the ice breaks up early. The ice go up there where they will melt. The marine

mammals follows them to Trembley Sound and Milne Inlet. They move up that way after the ice break up when they do that narwhal and other marine mammals follow them. Watching them go up there with your own eyes when they come from the south. When it is windy up there, there are more marine mammals when it is calmer there are less marine mammals.

Does the narwhal that come to Pond Inlet different now?

Caleb: In the last 15 years where we are I can only say what I've seen. When the ice break up early over there they go through there the immediate area in Pond Inlet has less narwhal when the ice breaks up earlier on Baffin Bay some narwhal do enter here as they are just following the ice pans.

Where do the narwhal go to have their calves?

Caleb: They go to different places to have calves. Up there where there are falls the estuary is where they molt as well as have their calves. That doesn't happen every year. This year there are not many that are getting calves. Two years ago we observed one that was getting a calf right in front of us, we were seeing more. A year later there were less and another year later there were more. That usually happens every four years when they have calves...they go up there to have their calves as we can see the new borns.

Because you have noticed in the last 15 years that it takes every four years when they have their calves is that obvious?

Caleb: I seem to know that. Now there are more adult males up there perhaps next year or the year after there will be more females that are giving birth. They are usually adult females, we try not to get the ones that are accompanied by their young ones. They will be more sought after in the next year that is what I know.

Of course people hunt near the calving areas?

Caleb: They do go where the calving areas are. In the calving areas where they are hunting seeing the ones with calves are not favoured because we don't want the calf to be motherless. The females also have yearlings with them, the yearlings are the ones we go after, there are also those that are a year older are also with them. Narwhal are with their young ones that are different ages, if they have a small one, there is also an older one with them as well as another one that is older. They usually are together before their mother is taken, there is usually not fully mature one as well as a new born

when they are of breeding age. Those that are mature, but still not old we call them 'the black ones', they usually have less fat, maybe they are not with their mother anymore. They are usually separate from others and there are adult males and they are also separate from others, just like us.

The hunters are usually try to take care of the ones with new borns?

Caleb: Of course, my kids go up there all the time, my son has seen them now so he tries not to hunt them, before when he wasn't used to seeing them he used to go after any narwhal he saw, so sometimes caught.

Do you also know where the narwhal go to spend the winter?

Caleb: They don't go to the inlets to spend the winter is what I can say. They go out to where there is always open water that is what we hear, near Greenland where there is always open water. Maybe they don't do that all the time. When they come near our community they behave differently maybe they do that too down there. When the current in the open area is still they go further to spend the winter.

Can you elaborate the differences when they arrive?

Caleb: Yes, they are different over there when the ice is breaking up and the inlets are getting free of ice they spend the time there. For example those areas to the south of us have many inlets so there are some narwhal down there. The ones that come here are not the same ones and when they first arrive they stay around but we cannot say that they are from here. Some narwhal stay around during the summer some have been observed going towards Arctic Bay from here. Inuit know that there are environmental reasons, after a week say it was seen here on Sunday the next Sunday same one is seen over there. We cannot say that it stayed here but they do spend some time here for sure.

Their migration during spring and fall do they come through all at once or in separate groups according to what you know?

Caleb: Yes, when we are hunting at the floe edge we, as hunters, communicate with one another what kind of narwhal we see; adult males, not fully grown mature ones, females...we always say what kind the first ones are adult males that come into the channel then the not fully grown mature ones come next following others and. Also during the summer when they are feeding up there the adult males are not always first; the females, without

calves, usually are first the ones that are passing through, those that are not passing through are adult males where we usually go after...it seems that way looking back what I have seen with my own eyes seems to be like that.

For example the characteristics seem to be different?

Caleb: Yes, for example male caribou, if there are males around there will be other caribou around they are the same way. If the adult males are around there will be young mature narwhal as well as the black ones nearby. The adult males seem to be the bosses because they are the protectors as we, Inuit, are like that too, they are also like that.

Do you have anything else to say that I did not ask or mentioned?

Caleb: From what I've noticed in the narwhal when they go up there during the last 15 years. They stay up there but they do come out once in a while some also come from Arctic Bay area. Now that the fall is here we are expecting the ones from Arctic Bay area, Somerset area that might come into the channel. When they arrive they leave together they will be passing through till the end of October when the ice is forming they don't come back if there is open water they will keep coming back. I will say what I've heard, when the snow is on the ground the narwhal see that, those are the conditions when they start migrating. The caribou move when it starts snowing to other areas, narwhal are the same, if there is snow on the ground because they can see what is on the land and when the visible tops of the land are changing when there is snow their movements are different.

They are smart too?

Caleb: Yes, they are smart, they go where other narwhals are, for example if a caribou tries to get away from something it will not go where there are no other caribou they will go where the caribou are. Narwhal also, if it tries to get away they will go towards where there are adult males. That is where they have security, they know that, that is what I've noticed happening all the time. If a narwhal is shot it will not go where there is nothing it will go where other narwhal are as they protect one another.

They protect one another?

Caleb: Yes, we are like that too if we were in an accident and get hurt we are not going where there is nobody around, we go towards where other Inuit are. No one can say that the narwhal that come up here are declining as

they are not the same ones that were here this summer next year they will go elsewhere. We will have different narwhal so their movements are different. As I mentioned after four years they get calves here, others are also calving in other areas in the inlets. They are not usually bothered when they are in the areas where there is sufficient food source. Up there where the falls are there are lots of char during the summer. Inuit call that area where they molt but here it used to be known as where the narwhal feed over there on the other side is where people got tent poles as well as where they get supplies to make qamutiks, thank you.

Thank you also.

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Pond Inlet: Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit of Narwhal

Can you say who you are?

I am Maztaisie Qaunaq.

Here in Pond Inlet have you noticed the ice the thickness and thinnest?

Maataisie: In the last two years I've noticed that the ice is breaking up sooner caused by the wind that has been happening for two years.

The landfast ice is smaller now near Pond Inlet?

Maataisie: The landfast ice is not smaller, the wind is melting the ice because it gets dangerous during the spring.

What about the narwhal have you noticed if they have changed or the characteristics are they the same?

Maatasie: From what I've noticed up in the estuary when there are noises it seems that the narwhal are now going towards Arctic Bay more often now.

That really has changed?

Maataisie: Yes, it has changed and over there what we call 'Anaulirialik' they stay around there, there used to be lots of narwhal. I've heard from a tourist from the ship that there are lots of narwhal there near Anaulirialik.

Are there differences in the characteristics of narwhal near Pond Inlet?

Maataisie: Yes, there are differences from way back.

Are there changes in the migration during the spring and fall?

Maataisie: Yes, it is noticeable, there used to be lots of narwhal but it is not like that anymore. When they arrive during the spring we seem to get the same narwhal that were here before.

That has recently been noticeable on the changes?

Maatasie: Yes, it is noticeable recently maybe caused by the ships.

Where do the narwhal go to have calves?

Maataisie: I know in Nunasiaq, Milne Inlet, in the estuary where the falls are and I've seen one new borns in open water.

During the spring when you can hunt from the floe edge they also give birth down there?

Maataisie: Yes, there are some with umbilical cords and I've seen during the spring when the fluke was visible as they are born that way.

Down at the floe edge?

Maataisie: Yes, down at the floe edge.

Of course that is where you hunt in the areas you mentioned?

Maataisie: Yes, of course.

Do you also know where the narwhal go to spend the winter?

Maataisie: Yes, down there, it was in the 1990s or 80s down near Qaanaaq that I saw as well as between Qikiqtarjuaq and nearer to Pangnirtung.

In the last ten years has the number of narwhal changed?

Maataisie: But, they seem to be stable but...we don't get them during the summer now here in Pond Inlet.

That seems to be changing every year?

Maataisie: Yes, it is really changing.

Do they seem to be declining or increasing?

Maataisie: They don't seem to be declining but the movements of narwhal have changed.

When the narwhal are migrating during the spring do they arrive all at once or in separate groups?

Maataisie: But down there in Baffin Bay they are far between the ones that are on the other side are usually more, I don't know where they go through the ones from Baffin Bay maybe they go through there which is quite far where it is sandy there are usually lots of narwhal there.

During the fall when they are migrating do they go all at once or in separate groups when they are going out?

Maataisie: They are in separate groups some from Arctic Bay area, they go through Baffin Bay that I've seen in the open water fewer come through here even though they are in large numbers.

Are the characteristics of narwhal different from one another?

Maataisie: Yes they are different down at Lancaster Sound the narwhal are a bit larger here they are smaller that is what I've seen.

Do they taste differently?

Maataisie: I don't know as I've never caught a narwhal down there I don't know how they taste but they are larger in size.

Maybe from what they eat?

Maataisie: Perhaps maybe they do come here too as they are larger in size, we usually don't get them here.

Do you have anything else to add that I did not ask or mentioned about narwhal?

Maataisie: I really don't have anything else but it has really changed today from when I came here in 1972 there were a lot of narwhal when we used to go to Nunasiaq to hunt narwhal but now it is different when we go there there is none.

What do you suspect is the cause for this change?

Maataisie: When I went up to the inlet to hunt caribou when it was windy in Pond Inlet I was asked to work by those that were staying at the inlet to retrieve a sonar that was at the bottom of the bay there were no narwhal around.

Do you remember what year it was?

Maataisie: Maybe it was four years ago now?

That had an effect?

Maataisie: Yes, it really had an effect even seals there were no marine mammals up there as the sonar was kind of large our boat was wide it just fit in the boat.

Maybe the char were also affected?

Maataisie: I really did not notice the char but there were no narwhal when that sonar was at the bottom.

Thank you for the interview.

Maataisie: Yes thank you for making me realize this.