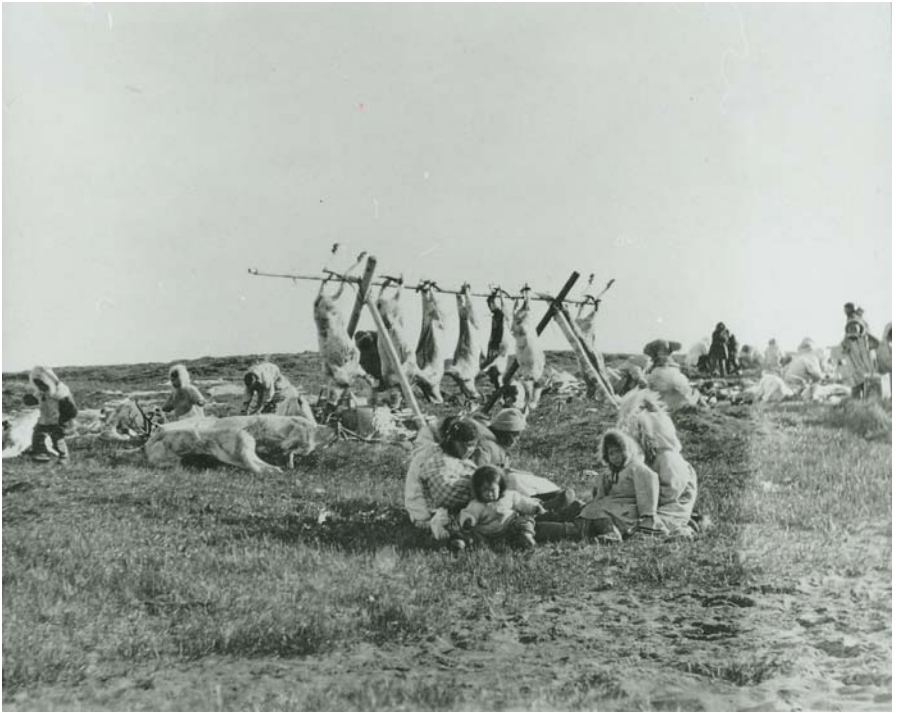


Quliaqtuat Niålikun Niåliq History



**North Slope Borough
Commission on Iñupiat History, Language & Culture
Acknowledging Our Way of Life
Through Summer Trading and Bartering at Niåliq**

**Elders and Youth Conference
Nuiqsut, Alaska
July 22-24, 2009**

History of Nigliq

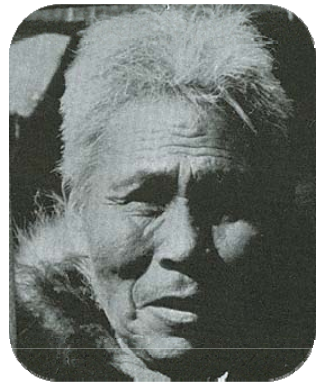
The Woods family, George (Kisik) and Nannie (Uiññiq), used to live at the original location of Niãliq. Nannie moved there as a teenager with her family and Kisik grew up nearby; at Beachy Point.



The original location is said to be located not far from the ocean on the Nechelik Channel and has good high ground, hunting and fishing abundance.

The trading post served both the coastal and inland people

where people from Anaktuvuk Pass (Nunamiut), Barter Island (Qaaktuãvigmiut), Colville River (Kuukpigmiut), Itqilliãmiut, Killiãmiut and Ikpik-pugmiut traveled to Niãliq for trading, establishing trading routes inland to the coastal areas. Such trading included inland caribou skins, coastal meats and skins from seals, whales, and bearded seals, and for basic goods such as sugar, milk, and flour after western contact was established.



Transportation

Trading routes to and from the trading center at Niåliq covers routes to Barrow, Anaktuvuk Pass, and Kaktovik. The trading route to Noatak also uses some of these trails. Trading routes mainly followed the major river patterns. Hunting and fishing trails went inland wherever caribou and fish were abundant, mainly on the major rivers along the coast and the Colville River delta. Trapping trails are mainly found along the coastline and inland near the tributaries of the Colville River. These trails also led to trading centers at Cape Halkett, Niåliq, Kayuqtusilik, and Uuliktuq.

"I myself became aware of my surroundings at the mouth of the Colville River. In the spring when the ice left, after subsisting as best we could, we would go downriver by boat to Niåliq. We would go down there to await the arrival of the travelers. So then when we reached the ocean, we ourselves always arrived early at Niåliq because the ice leaves early. While we are taking our time watching and looking for the travelers when they are coming down there...the people would gather along there with their drums. When they are in the last stages of their arrival, the people would start drumming and singing. The travelers would never suddenly come ashore because they wanted to watch this. So at this point they would make it as joyous of an occasion as they could. And then they would come ashore and people would haul their stuff for them. They would tent there at Niåliq."

Levi Greist, 1978 Elders Conference

"After everything is done, all the bartering, all the recreation, all the dances, whatever all types of recreation, when there is nothing left to do, the Kivaliñaat (from Barrow) would head further east, as far as Nuvuaq. Nuvuaq is a point which runs headlong into the ocean, way down to there, somewhere near Canada (as he points toward Nuvuaq), and then sometime during that summer, they would again head back paddling and sailing. Winds are favorable and very quickly they returned to Barrow after having bought what they wanted. When the Nunamiut are through with all of their activities, they would begin to concern themselves about their upriver journey back. It is somewhere around August that they would begin racing back upriver. They never lagged. When they reached the spot where they leave their boats, they would backpack things and continue their journey."

Arctic John Etalook

Trading

The coastal people would expect the inlanders' arrival in July, which is when the baby birds started flying. When the bartering began, the Nunamiut, who live inland, would trade for seal, whale, especially mikigaq (fermented whale), oil, rope, ammunition, and guns. They would prepare caribou skins, sinew, wolverines, wolves, red foxes, white foxes, ground squirrels and meat for the coastal people, which is how they greeted each other — with what they needed. They would be partners and barter for all the materials they wanted and needed to get by in life.

The coastal people on the other hand would trade for pivsi (dried fish) and they always prepared mikigaq and other materials the inlanders could not get there. The people of Barrow would also provide oil for them. Every trading was made wisely and all enjoyed each other's company and whatever they needed was settled. They liked giving the Iñupiat whale oil and blubber, seal, polar bear, and walrus while inland Iñupiaqs gave them sheep, moose, caribou, ptarmigan, squirrels and fish.

The Kivaliñaat came in from Barrow and Nuvuk and traded for furs, sinew, caribou leggings, caribou furs, fawn skins, and new clothing.

Activities

After setting up camp at Niâliq, they would wait for the others to arrive by netting for aanaakfiq, which are white fish that enter the river from the ocean. They would also hunt caribou when they were out. Kivaliniġmiut always raced across Harrison Bay when the weather was nice so they would not get caught in bad tide. They would then go ashore there and cut across to head to Niâliq. The sound of their gunshot was their way of letting those at Niâliq know they had arrived.

When everyone at Niâliq was done bartering and trading, there were many activities they did to pass the time. They played all kinds of games, including the broad jump, aqamak, and aana-ruuraq, which is played by grabbing each other and trying to pin the other down. The high kick game and wrestling were very popular. They would basically play any game they can think of. Some games they played, like the high kick, were used with balls and they made all kinds of balls, even with the skin of caribou by filling it with its hair. Nobody made the games a lifetime practice. They made a living and did not practice every day. They only played once in a while.

When camp was all set and the gathering area was ready, they would begin some great dances. They had a lot of fun and enjoyed socializing by visiting and looking at each other. Finally, before they were ready to depart, they would then tell each other stories from the Bible.

Niġliq Quotes From Our Respected Elders

- “..When they gathered together they would endeavor to barter with each other..” Henry Nashanik
- “When they are to gather at Niġliq, when they are making preparations to leave from here, they would gather together some oil and blubber.” Levi Greist, Elders Conference 1978 - Puiguitkaat
- “Every trading was made wisely and all enjoyed each other’s company whatever they need was settled. They like giving the Inupiat oil/blubber whale, seal, polar bear, and walrus while Inland Inupiaqs gave them sheep, moose, caribou and ptarmigan, squirrels and fish all traded well.” Arctic John Etalook
- “...When the beat is smooth and strong, the ground would budge to every beat...” Arctic John Etalook

Historic Places For Niġliq and Hunting

- Colville River is one of the richest rivers contributing to subsistence living – fishing, caribou hunting and trapping
- Kachemack (?) is an old site where the Ahmakak family used to live in the early 1900’s (around 1920’s). There are sod-house ruins still at this location. Caribou migration follows this area heading east.
- Pisiktaġvik is a good fishing area in the summer months.
- Milogeak – Near Kachemak this place is also abundant in caribou hunting.
- Napaun is a good place for anaaġliq and tittaaliq.
- Nechelik – 2nd Nuiqsut – good fishing for white fish.
- Neglengaat (Niglinaat) original Nuiqsut white fish.
- Mitkutlilak (Mitkutialaktuq) another name of Tapkaq, meaning an island. Good fishing for arctic char during summer
- Kuparuk – fishing; salmon berries