

DAVIDEE PIUNGNITUQ (1929-1993)

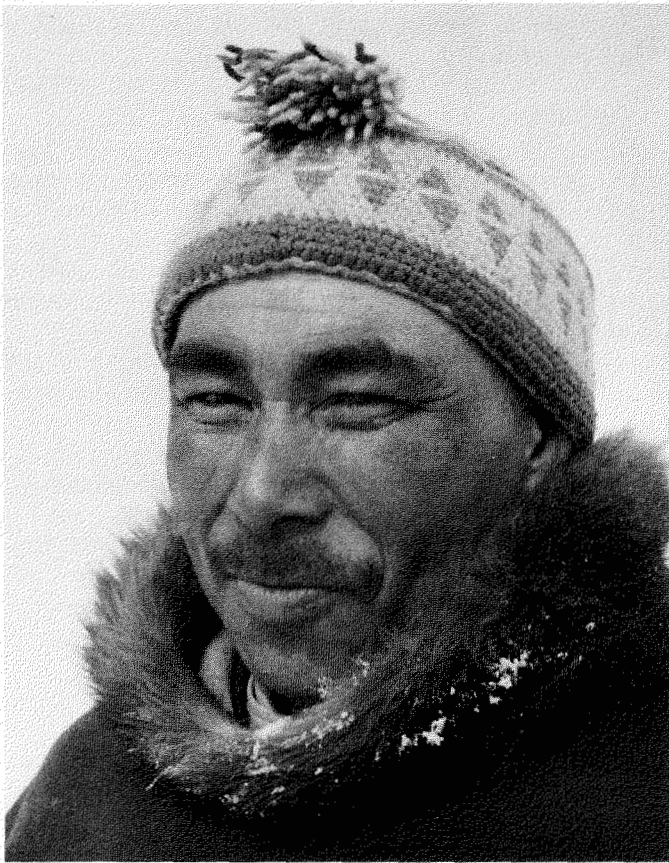


Photo taken by J. Kenneth Doust, courtesy of the Division of Anthropology, The Carnegie Museum of Natural History.

On 14 August 1993, Davidee Piungnituaq, age 64, died in the company of his family in Clyde River, Northwest Territories. Born near Sam Ford Fiord in March 1929, Piungnituaq lived and hunted throughout the area between Home Bay and Buchan Gulf, East Baffin Island. Until two months before his death, Piungnituaq resided at Aqviqtiuaq, in Eglinton Fiord, where he and his extended family had moved in the mid-1960s. It was here that he and his wife, Sipporah, raised their nine children.

Piungnituaq was the quintessential spirit of *inummarit*, recognized as a hunter and provider, leader of his extended

family after the death of his father, deeply religious and, above all, a loving spouse and parent. Throughout his life he studied the animals and land that he and his family depended upon, always instructing his sons and daughters by example. Each day of hunting ended with all the members of the Aqviqtiuaq community gathering in his *qangmaq* to share in the day's harvest. And each evening, youngsters listened as he recounted the day, discussing the characteristics of the sea ice or the behavior of a polar bear, each "lesson" delivered *isumasayuq* (with wisdom). Especially memorable was his delight when his seven-year-old daughter Letia, thinking she was unobserved, ventured onto the spring ice to shoot a basking ringed seal — it was a much enjoyed meal!

Piungnituaq was of the land. Throughout his life, his sojourns at Clyde, with the exception of Christmas, rarely lasted longer than the one day it took to trade several months' accumulation of seal and polar bear skins at the Hudson's Bay Company. His preference for life away from town did not prevent him, however, from indulging in hours of conversation with kinsmen by CB radio, especially when the state of his health no longer permitted him to travel to Pond Inlet or Igloodik by dog team or skidoo.

In the course of time, Piungnituaq, not surprisingly, drew the attention of scientists, journalists and ordinary travellers. Invariably he welcomed all of us with equal generosity to Aqviqtiuaq and into his home, learning on each occasion something new about *Qallunaat*. His exceptional work in whale bone, depicting aspects of Inuit culture and oral tradition, led to his first and only voluntary visit to "the South" — an exhibition of his art in Montreal in the mid-1970s.

Piungnituaq's passing is that of a special person. His legacy, however, goes beyond the bounds of his life. It lives not only through his children but through each of us whom he touched, whether for a day or for decades.

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