



Kinngait, ᑭᑎᑎᑭᑦᑲᑦ, “High Mountains”

Introduction

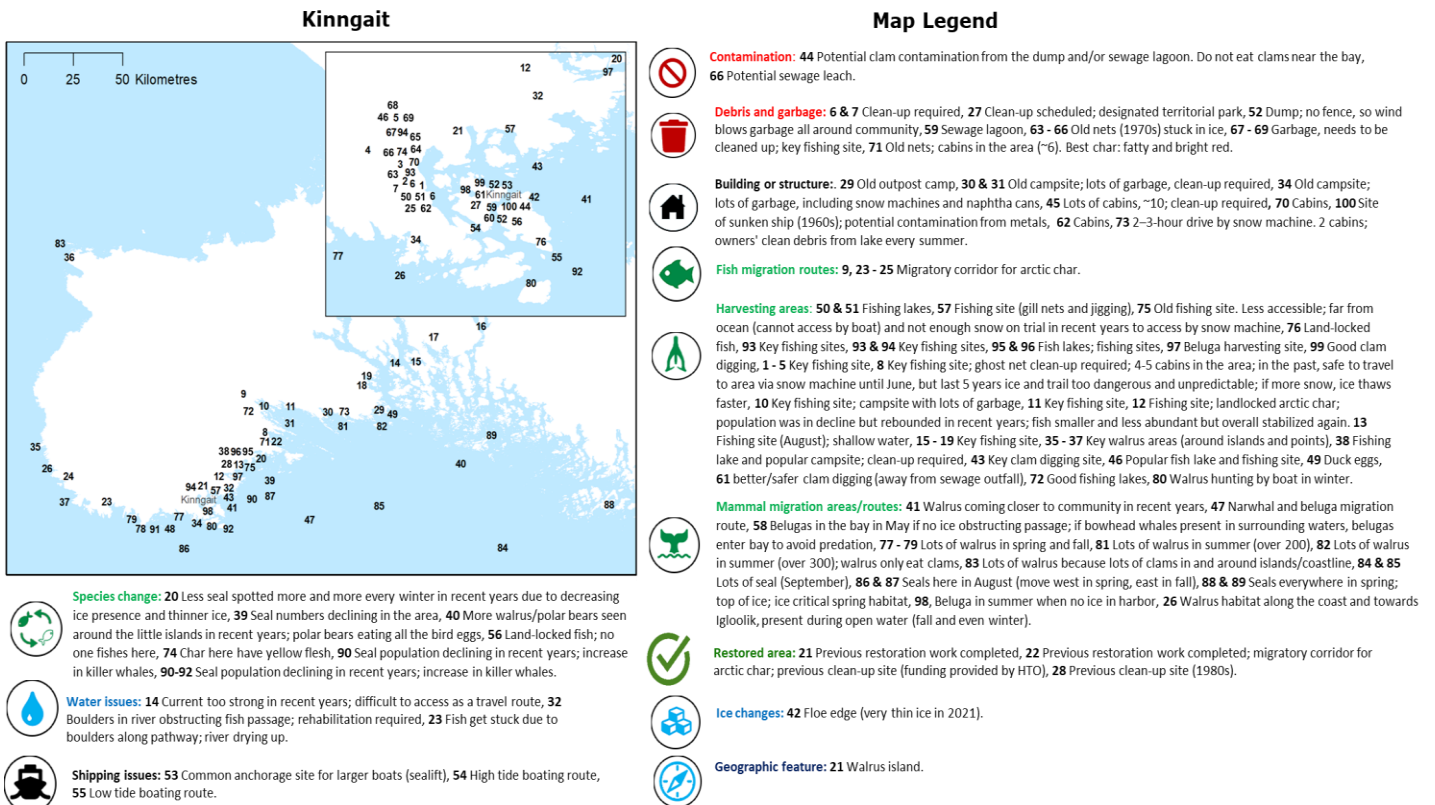
Kinngait is located on Dorset Island, near Foxe Peninsula, at the southwestern tip of Baffin Island in the Qikiqtaaluk region of Nunavut¹. The traditional economy plays an important role, with many residents participating in hunting, fishing, and gathering activities¹. The community’s hunting and fishing area spans approximately 300km north to south, 450km east to west including western portions of Hudson Strait and southeastern portions of Foxe Basin and Foxe Channel². Residents are also involved in other occupations, including sales and services, government, and trades¹. Adjacent to Dorset Island is Mallikjuaq Island, which is home to Mallikjuaq Territorial Park³. The Park preserves several important historical sites and supports many forms of plant and animal life including, wildflowers and nesting birds. The Dewey Soper (Isulijarnik) Migratory Bird Sanctuary is located north of the community and is an important habitat for snow geese and many other nesting birds⁴.

Community Restoration Priorities

1. Ghost net clean-up is required at two lakes close to town; 2. Monitoring of walrus haul-outs (abundance, distribution) so impacts from increased shipping and routing can be better understood. There is also fear of increased shipping due to Baffinland Phase 2 proposal, which will see the volume of ships increasing in key coastal areas and walrus habitat, and
3. Coastal clean-up required at two soapstone quarry sites (Aberdeen Bay and Kelt Inlet) to remove 45-gallon drums and naphtha cans.

Community Map

The CRN research team visited the community in March 2021.



Literature Review

Sea ice is an essential part of Inuit culture and way of life in Kinngait. Old sea ice, grounded icebergs, or the surface of certain ice formations are sometimes used as a source of drinking water by residents⁵. Sea ice is also critically important for travel and accessing hunting grounds.

Attributes	Examples of Environmental Changes and Observations
Sea ice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sea ice is becoming thinner and is breaking up earlier in the spring and the melting process is faster, which poses safety risks to the community². There has also been an increase in the number of areas that no longer freeze over⁵.
Seasonal changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Warmer temperatures are the most observed weather change in Kinngait⁵. Residents have noticed fewer days of extreme cold, indicated by the lack of ice fog present; more overcast conditions; warmer winds; and a decreased need to wear caribou skin clothing. Others have also noted that snow is melting faster than before².
Multi-year sea ice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The timing of sea ice freeze-up is occurring later than in the past; sea ice is becoming thinner; and there is less multi-year ice⁵.
Weather	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community members note that it is getting colder later and warming up earlier⁵. There are fewer blizzards and less snow accumulation in the area⁵. An increase in unpredictable weather and cloud formations formerly used to predict weather conditions, is no longer reliable⁵. It is also windier in the fall, which does not allow for ice formation. Warmer winter temperatures are shortening the ice season, and hunters have less time to utilize the ice, posing a threat to food security for the community².

Attributes	Examples of Ecosystem Changes and Observations
Polar bears	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community members have noted that polar bears seemed to be increasing in abundance but are not seen around the community as often as before².
Walrus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walrus are an important food source for residents and the Hudson Strait provides an important overwintering area for them². However, residents have noted that walrus meat is potentially more dangerous to eat now than in the past due to worms found in the meat².
Whales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kinngait is situated near a major migration route for belugas that pass in the spring and fall, and numbers seem to be increasing. Bowhead whale abundance also appears to be increasing. Other species such as minke whales and orcas have also been observed in the area².
Seals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are not as many ringed seals compared to the past and their population appeared to be declining². Some hunters believe the decline is due to polar bears eating too many seal pups or due to an increased presence of orcas in the area². Bearded seal populations appear to be healthy but are not typically hunted by community members².
Fisheries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arctic char appears to be increasing in abundance and are present in many lakes and rivers near the community on Foxe Peninsula². Community members have noted that the lakes with existing commercial char quotas are too far away from the community and can only be accessed two months of the year².
Birds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many birds are present throughout the Kinngait region including several varieties of ducks and geese, gulls, ravens, owls, and ptarmigan².
Invertebrates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community members note that there appeared to be more clams in the area². Blue mussels can be found all along the coast at low tide and were brought to the region in 1999/2000 from Northern Quebec.²

Based on the Current Gaps in the Literature, Research Needs Include:

- Monitoring and testing:** More research on the health and population status of animals that are consumed in the community such as seals, caribou, and fish².
- Feasibility studies:** Commercial harvests for species including cod, clams, lobster, shrimp, and snow geese². Residents believe there is enough char in lakes that could sustain a commercial quota².
- Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit and Western science studies:** Methods to foster traditional knowledge transfer. More Inuit knowledge and Western science studies on sea ice change and impacts on marine and coastal resources⁶.

Selected references

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CONTACT

Dr. Lucia Fanning, Principle Investigator -
Lucia.Fanning@Dal.Ca

Ms. Jade Owen, Project Advisor -
jade.britton.owen@gmail.com