

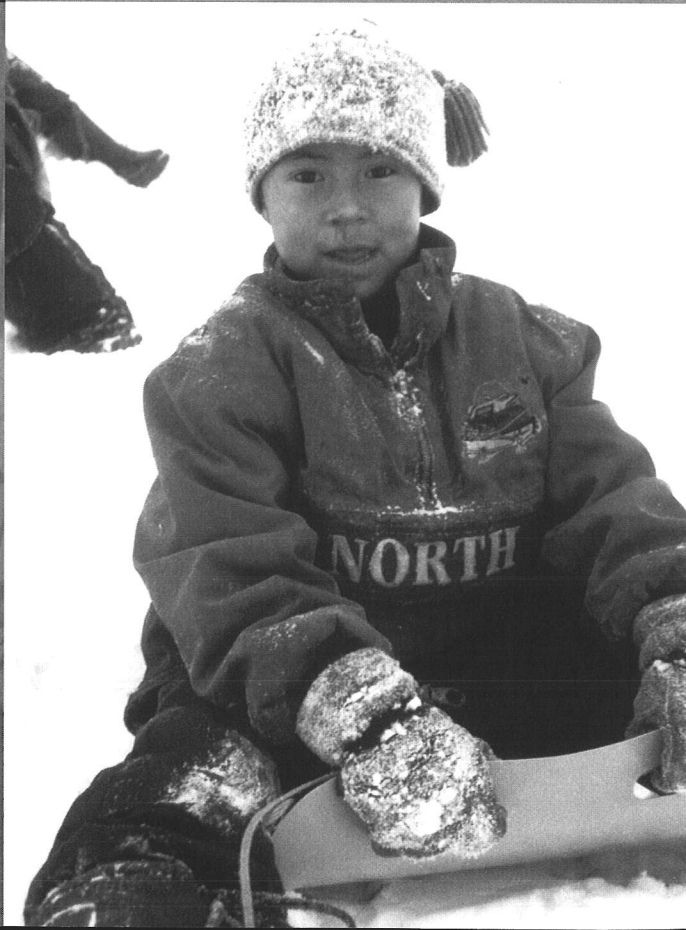
Annie Tikivik, Mary Korgak, and Surusimituq Michael

Interview by Jennifer Kennedy

Kimmirut is a small Inuit hamlet of just over four hundred people, located on the south shore of Baffin Island. The hamlet is named after the large limestone formation that directly faces the settlement. In Inuktitut, the language of the Eastern Arctic Inuit, the word “kimmirut” means “looks like a human heel.” Indeed, the slope of the limestone formation does have the look of a giant’s heel. Kimmirut has been a traditional camping site for thousands of years and has had various features of a settled community for about one-hundred years. There has been a Hudson’s Bay post here since the turn of the twentieth century, as well as an RCMP detachment and an established Anglican church. However, it has only been in the past forty or fifty years that various Inuit families have given up their nomadism and come to live full time in the community. In fact, even in the last twenty years, families have “moved in off the land.” Hunting, camping, and fishing remain preferred activities for most residents. In town, there is a church, a health station with two nurses, a power plant, a gas station, a municipal garage, a daycare, a small playground, a school, a community gym, two grocery/retail stores, one eight room hotel, a Community Learning Centre (satellite campus of Nunavut Arctic College), and a Visitor’s Centre for summer traffic from cruise ships and campers travelling through Katannalik Park. Kimmirut is reachable by boat in the summer and by snowmobile for certain parts of the winter, but it truly depends on the thrice weekly air-service of Twin Otter bush planes. Linked to the global economy by satellite TV, cybershopping, mail order, and Napster, it remains one of Nunavut’s more traditional communities. [Note: it does have its own webpage; a search engine will turn it up]

I interviewed three school girls on the afternoon of October 24, 2000. Annie Tikivik is nine-years-old and in grade five, Mary Korgak is ten and in grade six, and Surusimituq (everyone calls her Ala) Michael is eleven and in grade six.

I began asking the girls what activities there are to do as kids in Kimmirut. They listed gymnastics club, volleyball, and Chinese jump rope. In fact, they kept watching the clock so not to be late for Chinese jump rope. “Gymnastics is for fun,” said Mary. In gymnastics, taught by the grade five/six teacher Jessica Arthur, they have learned to execute front flips, cartwheels, rolls, backrolls. Since starting the club last winter, the girls



have performed for the community at the Spring Fling celebration held at the school in April.

Other activities for kids in Kimmirut are to play outside, visit each other's homes, and watch TV. Ala said her favorite show is *The Simpsons*, Mary mentioned channel twenty-five cartoons (maybe the cartoon specialty channel or YTV? I don't know) and *The Powerpuff Girls*. I asked them what they liked about *The Powerpuff Girls*. "Because they are heroes," said Ala, and, "they are strong," added the other girls.

When asked about their favorite music, they listed Macy Gray, Christina Aguilera, and Britney Spears. Mary added the New Spice Girls.

When asked what their favourite food is, all three chimed in without hesitation, "PIZZA." Ala enjoys homemade pizza every Friday night at her best friend, Brianna Jaffray's house. Her father Robert Jaffray, Coordinator of Park Operations Nunavut, is known locally for his great pizza (at least I can vouch for it). The other two girls buy their pizza frozen at either the Northern Store or the Kimik Coop.

Halloween is a very big event here. It is celebrated during the day at the school with various activities including costume contests, scavenger hunts, and games. But all the kids can hardly wait until the evening's trick or treating. Last year, we had about one-hundred and fifty kids come to our door, which is almost the total school-age population of the community. Many of them arrived by snowmobile, bundled up from the cold with only their masks or face-paint showing. I asked the girls what characters they would dress up as this Halloween. Annie is going to be a bat, Mary was planning on being Spiderwoman, and Ala is going to be a Web Witch. I asked her to describe a Web Witch and she said, "a girl with white webs, most of it is black, some purple."

I asked them what activities they did with their families and they said fishing, especially with all their cousins. They also attend Summer Science Camp, an annual event for community children run by Katannalik Park staff. Summer Science Camp mixes modern science with traditional knowledge. This past camp the participants went hunting, berry picking, fishing and even swam in Soper Lake. I was surprised by this as the harbor ice only begins to melt in June, although smaller lakes, waterfalls, and rivers around Kimmirut begin melting in May. Ala said that Soper Lake is not deep. She said parts of it are "cold, hot, cold, hot. We were only there three ("ten," interjected Annie) minutes and our teacher, she told us not to go swim because she thought it was too cold and too windy."

I then asked them about their families. Mary lives with her mother and stepfather. She is the youngest with two sisters and two brothers. Annie lives with her mother and father and is the second oldest. She has a sister and two brothers, one of whom is adopted, a very common practice in



Inuit culture. Ala lives with her mother and father. She is the second youngest. Her oldest sister lives in another larger Baffin community, Pangnirtung. Still at home are her older sister and younger brother.

I asked the girls how they thought adults were different than kids. They said, "they're old, they smoke." They also said that adults hunt and ride Hondas, skidoos, trucks, and motorcycles.

I asked them if they wanted to be a kid or an adult. They all liked being kids better than being adults. When asked why, they said they got to "do more stuff than adults, like math and computers." Mary said that with her oldest sister, "my mom tells her to do the dishes, she is always telling her to do something," and while sometimes Mary has to do the dishes as well, it is not as often. The girls are usually paid to help around the house through an allowance.

It was nearing the time for jump rope and the girls were getting restless, so I finished with the question, "What will it be like for kids in Kimmirut in fifty years?" They had to think about that. Finally they said it would be "different." When I asked how so, Ala said, "we would be old and the kids will be young." When I asked them what activities kids would have available, they said that they would still play, stay out, ride on skidoos, and slide in the snow.

Not too different from now.