**Rough Transcript for Uqausiksavut**

As part of the COSEWIC (*Nattiit*/Ringed Seals) Submission

SHEILA & SAMANTHA KATSAK

WITH

INUKSIUTIT: INUIT FOOD SOVEREIGNTY IN NUNAVUT RESEARCH COLLECTIVE



0:10 – 00:25

Sheila Katsak

If I had grown up like that, I wouldn’t like seal – chewing sealskin so much. But it is like everyday food is what I keep saying. When you are having it every day you are not thinking about it. Defending it.

00:25 – 01:05

Damian Enoogoo

I am going to ask you about your opinion on putting ring seals on the Species at Risk Act. Are you for, against, or n eutral on this subject?

Dexter Areak

I think I am against it. So people could catch harvest for the culture and bonding, sewing, and do everything they can do. Expand the culture.

01:06– 01:11

Christian Milton

Kind of be angry to not hunt it anymore.

01:12 – 01:49

Caleb Ootoova

This is something that we have to do and it meets our needs. If we were told that we no longer have to eat seal meat, I think it would be very impossible for us to adjust to this change. If there were rules and regulations placed and the rules and regulations are made by people who don't live here and impose them on people who live here. This is such a discourse and a conflict and it does not sit right with me.

01:49 – 01:01:59:18

Christian Milton

For me it would be kind of a sad thing since Ringed Seals are one of the commons to hunt out on the land. Out on the ice.

<transition to Josh on ice cutting up Ringed Seal & bedding the flippers>

02:11 – 04:47, 6:26-7:18

Joshua Katsak

The first time when I first had a shot of the seal, I was seven years old and the small gun .22, small .22 was too big for me and this part when you pull it backwards, it was next to the bolt because I could not pull it with just one hand. I had to hold after putting my hand like this. I had to use both of my hands to pull it back and my gun was too long, I could not put it under my arm. I had to go past my arm to hold it like that under my arm and I would shoot that way in the springtime. ~~It was.~~ I was seven years old and I shot a young seal while we were seal hunting at the holes. Just in the springtime when they were just becoming baby pups and people were seal hunting at that time and someone had caught a seal to try and get some seal fat for our good looks. This was the first time I caught a young seal and the snow was getting soft. I'm not sure maybe I was too nervous even though I was wearing a caribou parka. Got really cold and started shivering and from there I started to learn to hunt seal. So because at that time we used the seals a lot and we did not get much store-bought food at that time. Whatever we did, they only bought things that were going to be of staple of use like guns and ammo and tea and flour and we only bought a few things.

<Joshua skinning seal and fermenting flipper intermezzo>

Joshua Katsak

So the seal was used a lot. A whole part of the seal was used including the fat would be used for the qulliq [oil lamp] and skins for the clothing and if it's not being used for clothing to feed the dogs. There was nothing thrown away other than the bones and only the bones were left and the stomach intestines or whatever is in the stomach was used by the dogs and some of the intestines were also used by people as food

We even use the flippers and stuff to cache them. The seal is used a lot for every type of meal you can think of. You can use the whole seal. The only thing that is not used is the gallbladder. They used to be able to eat them as well when they are cooked properly.

<getting flippers out of oil and skinning flippers>

<opening scene Mittimatalik>

07:55 -09:35

Caleb O.

Well, for people who don't live here and make rules and regulations, they are the ones who seem to impose a different lifestyle than what is required. What it means to be from Canada is to make rules and regulations for Canadians, although some Canadians are influenced by things that are not Canadian. And the values that are gained and the common sense that is acquired seem to be abandoned. It seems Canadians are influenced by outside sources. Canadians make legislation and break them. What it means to be a Canadian is that you grow up in Canada and we are Inuit living in Canada, except the rules and regulations placed on us are made from outside sources.

Regilee O.

This consultation creates conflict within the Indigenous community, for example, polar bears. They became regulated, influenced by outside sources beyond Canada. And the influence came from people who have not seen the Arctic, have not lived in it, have not been here. And these people make the rules and regulations. And if we made their rules and regulations, there would also be a conflict there. They don't know the land, the environment and how people live. They even ask questions, a question like, where are you from? And I would reply from Pond Inlet and they would say, where is that? They don't know. These people who don't know, they make the rules and regulations. This does not sit right with me.

09:34 – 10:49

Nigel K with Damian Enoogoo

DE

Putting seals, like the Ringed Seals, under the Species at Risk Act would do for you? How would it impact you?

NK

That meaning that it would be hard for Inuit continue living without having the traditional food in stock because a lot people sometimes depend on the meat and then on their skins for the outfits to wear through the winter

DE

So yeah that would impact that, but how would it impact you? It would impact you big, small?

NK

Just minor impact

DE

Speaking of the Elders and People in their mid-40’s, they would be very much impacted if they were to get restricted this much.

NK

Yes, it would.

10:49 – 15:04

Joshua Katsak

Especially now when we're not having too much seal in this part.

There's way too many ships. That's one of the reasons. The other reason is that the water is getting too warm. The food that is for the seals around here is probably going into colder climates now. For example, Oliver Sound, which doesn't have any ships. The ships don't go there. It used to have lots of seals. Now, because the water is too warm down, the seals don't go there anymore. So there's absolutely no seal at some point during the summer. But once it starts to get colder and the water starts getting colder, then the seals start coming in. Nowadays too, the seals don't seem to be as fat.

Do they have seals?

No, they don't eat on seals a lot. It's mostly maybe little cods or small herrings. Small herrings are mostly what's in the stomachs. If we were to have no more seal in this area, there would be considered more people who would be starving. It's possible if there's no seals that if we get into a situation where we're banned not to have seals, we would be hungry people. Some say it would be occasions where people are trying to catch seals, but because polar bears are too many people who are trying to catch seals, we're just feeding the polar bears. So the polar bears would be taking them. Sometimes in other communities, the polar bears are eating a lot of the seal pups. Once polar bears can eat a lot of seals at one point, mostly fat. We know that one polar bear can eat five seals for one sitting just to get the amount of fat that it needs from a seal. It would be full of 20 gallons of seal oil in the stomach when you open it up. I know that if there's too many polar bears that a lot of seals, they eat a lot of seals and they have no more seals. When the polar bear is not too hungry, it doesn't eat meat. It just eats the fat. I have seen and witnessed when the polar bears are seal hunting that all they eat is the fat of the seal and then they leave it behind. They remove the skin, then they eat the fat and leave the meat behind. Only if it's really hungry that it would be eating part of the meat. Fat polar bears don't eat the meat of the seal. Polar bear, when it's full, has about 10 to 15 gallons of oil in its stomach, up to 20 gallons. If it's in the stomach, it has a big stomach. When it's full of fat, it's full of oil, you cannot even lift it up. The stomach would be completely full of seal fat.

If there were too many foxes in the inlets where the seal pops are being born, sometimes we end up with a lot of foxes in these areas because they're looking into all the new seal pops and the dense because they know that seal pops are being born. They notice the moon. If the moon shows up, that's when the seal pops are being born. At a particular month, for example, as soon as they know that particular moon has shown up, they know that seals are being born. As soon as the moon shows up, we know that the seals will be coming into the islands because people know these things and animals know these things as well in the springtime and in the wintertime. As soon as the moon shows up, animals would be moving around and start looking for food.

People are thinking that there are some critical changes to the seals because there are less seals... When there are no ships around here and when there is less warm water coming in, all of the animals start coming in around the Navy board inlet. We end up with more seals that way. I am sure right now that seals are coming in just now in the fall and late fall and we are getting the smaller seals now being caught. All the ships moving seem to have stopped. The seals show up again even though there didn't seem to be that many before. The bearded seals are not leaving but they will not be caught in the winter time. There will be seals being caught in the fall and in the winter. The seals are getting pretty fat right now and the skins are very g ood now. In the fall time, the skins get very good on the seal skins. In the spring time, the skins are not very good in the spring time because they are molting and they start getting different types of skins. They are fighting each other in the spring time so the skins start getting scratched. Now that up to the sunshine coming back, from the winter up to the sun coming back, there is some continuous hunting of the seal. This is the winter season and this is perfect time for mitts to be made and comets to be made because this is the perfect time for the skins over the fall and winter.

01:12:38:19 – 01:15:27:11

Joshua Katsak

When you're thinking about getting dog food and the amount of seals you needed to have for your dogs, I believe it's going to be a big impact if we have any bans on the seal. In the 1970s, when the narwhals were being given a quota. Pond Inlet was only given a quota of 100 narwhals from the spring to the fall. This quota system was very restrictive and a lot of us were trying to get tags to rush around, try to be the first person to get those tags. It would have to be in the same situation that if we lived in a quota system for seals, and we had the same instance with the polar bear tags that we were given a certain quota. Maybe we have almost 30 tags now for polar bears for a whole year. They are increasing the quota on the polar bears and they would add a little bit more. This seal, if we were to have a quota on a seal, there would probably be a lot of people who are rushing to get that amount of quota wanting to be the first. I'm not sure if we would be able to follow the rules in a way, even if we have a lot about it, because if we have no food, even if we are narwhal hunting or something, we need to get food for that day or we are not able to get fish. Seals are the only ones available. I think we could not tell anybody that we caught a seal if we had a quota system to hide our catch. For example, when there was no caribou anymore, it would be devastating for the young people who are experts at seal hunting now. They would definitely be affected by any kind of quota, especially for those that are hunting seals now that they were very good at seal hunting. If they were now banned not to hunt in the seals, they would have to find alternative sources of doing something else that may not be too good for their lifestyle. They would have to try to go to a different type of activity, even if they don't have enough something to eat and having not enough sufficient food.

<intermezzo Joshua skinning seal start>

19:21 – 20:28

Sippoarah Alloolo with Jessica Penney

How people crave country food? Or if they crave it differently than maybe they did in the past? There is a lot of craving because, for example, caribou. Nobody's allowed to count caribou the way they used to. And they can't hunt polar bear the way they used to because they got codas. The only so many are allowed to be killed in polar bears. Caribou are the same thing. They're seasonal only. But when you grew up with those diet, you crave for it, of course. If you were to move up here and never have any sudden peas, you're going to crave for even peas. That's what happened to me for a little while. When I had to adapt into our world, you'd crave for what you grew up in. So it's a very bodily attachment.

20:28 – 21:12

Regilee Otoova

I have probable has the worst graving for country food. When I don’t have seal meat I am meat. I might have to move somewhere else if we happen to have no more seal meat in Nunavut.

21:13 – 23:04

Sipporoah Aloolloo with Jessica Penney

**JP** What do you see as the main reasons why people are having these cravings?

Legislation. The biggest thing is legislation. Animal rights or whatever. Green peace. I don't know who runs these coda things.

**JP** So it's kind of the rules and regulations that exist from hunting?

Yes. I'm not sure, but Pond is only allowed 40 or 60 caribos. How many caribous a year? And there's like 1,500 of us in Pond. Of course we're going to have cravings.

**JP** And how do you think that impacts the community to not be able to access the

food that people crave?

What do you mean?

**JP** Does it impact people? Like what people eat? I guess it depends.

How do people feel about that? Not being able to access caribos like they might want to?

Resentment towards the authorities that are imposing those regulations. Especially if you are unilingual, like you see that as they're trying to control even our diet now.

**JP** So your mentality is like, huh?

It creates negative feelings. Even though everybody knows we grew up in those times. We crave for that. We're hungry for that. We can't afford the high prices these days. Even just to have meat in the evenings. We'll only have meat in the evenings because we can't afford the high prices. Especially in the north. When I go down south, when I see the prices of meat, "Oh, we pay three times more than that!" So it really impacts the nutrition value in our community.

23:05 – 23:34

Caleb Ootova

It has always been like that where the white man is the authority over indigenous communities. And it makes me very angry. Anyone from the indigenous community do not act like they are better than everyone else, even though they have the knowledge, the common sense and informal education, the kind of education that takes many years to obtain. And these people are governed by people who are not from their community, even though I am overreacting.

01:20:49:08 – 01:24:37:05

<intermezzo Josh cutting up seal sequence>

24:26 – 27:24

Rhoda and Joshua

**RK** When you had your first seal, during that time that you were for the older people were they always part of the seal hunting?

Yes, yes of course. Even my grandpa had to be part of the hunting crew. Everyone had a use in the camp. Whoever was able, especially in the seal hunting period, they would be with all the holes and stuff. So my grandfather and others would be part of the hunting. If there's six people, for example, they were helping each other out with the seal hunting. If they're in a camp in a group together then they would be helping each other out. Sometimes people who are working together, they would be an elder within us to help us to keep us organized and manage well.

We were told that we're not supposed to catch too much. The elders would organize and manage the hunting. Even though we felt that we could hunt some more, even though we wanted some more, sometimes when we had that opportunity, the elders would say this is enough. That we don't need to do any more hunting and they would stop. Yes, especially in the springtime. They had to hunt what is, even though there was no particular laws or rules, they had to catch what is manageable for them and what is useful for them. Sometimes we were allowed to hunt more seals than what we were going to use so that we could catch them. So this was a period where we could do whatever we want to catch more than we usually would need, especially for caribou as well and also for narwhals as well, even though we thought that we could get more, they would have a limit to what we could catch.

27:24 – 27:34

Dexter Areak with Damian Enoogoo

DE

Why is country food important for you?

DA

It might be either familial bonding or friends bonding with friends.

DE

So you are saying it is not that we are eating but also enjoying together, bonding over, catching, harvesting all that stuff.

<intermezz o finishing cutting up seal, Rhoda with fresh piece of meat>

28:42 – 30:41

Mayor Jimmy Manning (Kinngait)

Very, very important that we have country food. And that having to have quota sometime do not really work because the Inuit if they needed it they will going to get it anyways. And they are allowed and they should be allowed. Nothing to go to waste. If they going to abuse and waste it, well that is another story. But quota system is not Nunavut, Inuit system.

<intermezzo Josh and Rhoda with Jabez, finishing cutting up seal>

Our Elders, we were kind of taught that you look after, you protect the animals. You don’t waste it and then it is okay. And that is how we should be teaching our children. Maintaining.

<intermezzo Josh cleaning intestines sequence>

32:23 – 32:53

Dexter Areak with Damian Enoogoo

DE

It is not just that we are eating it. There is also a big process that goes with it. Is that what you are saying? Like we are cooking. We’re learning how to cook together this seal, this polar bear. With that being said, it’s pretty much a big part of our lives to eat country food.

<Rhoda cooking seal meat sequence>

35:09 – 37:18

Joey Sanders with Damian Enoogoo

DE

This very big question is. How do you feel the Ringed Seals going under the Species at Risk

JS.

It will be shocking if they did it this way. It would be consumed to the effect of the land maybe {?}.

DE

So what will happen is that they will restrict you from hunting/harvesting ringed seals which is very vital for our qamiit, pants, sewing.

JS

Survival

DE

Yeah all those sorts of things and you are more worried about the population of the seal

JS

I guess it worries me more for the people who hunt to survive. It has been taught from generations to generations that people like us are hunting for seals or other animals for their food, their skin, tools.

DE

So, if they were ever happen to put them down for real would it benefit you or affect your life in any way or form?

JS

Even though it is shocking, but I didn’t have much of the experience of a hunter much. So it probably will be a little much.

37:18 – 38:18

Dexter Areak with Damian Enoogoo

DE

So about seals, what if we were take out one animal out of the rest?

DA

I think people who hunt and harvest the seals, the Ringed Seals, I think some people

might go empty-handed or just catch very few.

DE

Like what if they were told to never hunt seals ever again?

DA

I think it will restrict our culture. So we’ve been doing this for a very many years. I think it’lll degrade it.

38:18 – 39:49

Christian Milton with Damian Enoogoo

DE

Like, what if the government were to get their hands on our culture and say “you can’t hunt seals anymore”. How would you feel about that?

CM

Why would they do that? It has been our tradition to it, to hunt seals to survive.

DE

Like they are considered to be endangered species, and they were to pass a law that says “you can’t seals anymore!” How would you feel if that were to happen?

CM

If that were to happen then there is going to be a drop of … no … there is not a lot of food to hunt anymore out on the land if that was a law. Ringed seals was our main thing to eat out on the land. There would be a big starvation if that were to happen.

<intermezzo Rhoda cutting up seal ribs for cooking>

43:07 – 49:06

Joshua Katsak

We would have to change our lifestyle even because not having enough food is destroying to family relations. Not sharing and having a family relationship makes a difference to the family unit. If there was a larger coda, even though there are larger codas, it was difficult to share a small amount of coda. If they gave us a small coda, it would be more difficult. It would be a lot of changing of our lifestyle, definitely. If there was a larger coda applied, then it would be okay. We might need to get more jails because of a lot of lawbreakers. We would have to get a lifestyle that is different than what we are used to. The Narwhals coda is not over the limit nowadays and it's not a concern anymore about the coda so much. Even because we don't go over the coda anymore. Also with caribou, they now are on a coda system. In that instance, it makes a big difference because people are now learning to break the law and do things behind the law, hiding things that they are doing. If we run out of our coda again, yes, we are definitely going to break the law and do some hunting that is not legal. It would be the same with the seal hunting because if we run out of the coda, then we would be learning to do our hunting secretly without letting people know or hiding things from others and not saying something. We ended up not sharing to other people because we are hiding what we got and we are keeping it in our house. People are hungry and we are not giving it to them to seal or anything because we cannot show the meat that has been caught. We learned to break the law this way. This is what I am seeing at the moment, just thinking about the coda system.

…

Up to today, we utilize the seals a lot. We are not able to farm animals. We are not tame animals. We would have to keep hunting them because we are not able to farm these type of wild animals. This is not our lifestyle.

<intermezzo Rhoda cutting up rib seals>

56:15 – 58:35

Sheila Katsak

The discussion around food sovereignty will be coming up over and over again because of the real-time pressures towards the culture. And the definition has to come from the people who are asserting it. It can't be defined from an outside source. It has to come from us, from the users, from the people who practice it every day.

Food sovereignty is a new concept, especially new for Inuit. We don't really discuss it often, so there's no term for it. And it's okay to say we don't know what it is, but we're going to explore it. And we're going to define the term and we're going to use it to change our narrative of what it means. It's not something easily translatable in Inuit. And to be able to translate it, we have to define it, what it means.

What it means for us. And for me, it's to assert a culture. It's to practice culture, to use culture, to use it every day. For me, it's deciding what is our right for Inuit. Deciding what it is. Deciding as a group what it is. What our rights are. What we give to each other Inuit as a Right. Before we tell it to someone else. These are our rights.

58:36 – 01:00:00

Regilee Otoova

We have a lot of things to say about the subject. We don't talk about the subject at all. But if we were to say what we have been thinking about, I think people would understand how hard it is to be Inuit.

Caleb

Yes, we would be understood.

Regilee –

Well, now is the time to be understood. I would like to thank you for this project and be given space to say what we need to say. In regards to seal, it is a necessity for us. It provides us food and clothing. It is something that we value very much. It is something that keeps us warm because we live in an environment that is very cold. If we were to live in this environment and we no longer have a diet of seal meat and our reliance is solely on store bought food, we would always be cold.

Caleb - we have run out of things to say

Regilee -

Our anger has pent up and the anger of our ancestors is also pent up. If our ancestors were angry, their anger would be greater and valid. Even so, this anger is valid. This is not how we want to live. It's not how we want to live at all. The seal meat that we have will always be our food. It is something that gives us life, that gives us strength and warmth when we live in a place of cold environment. Thank you. We were able to say what we needed to say.

<end scene with pot finished cooking

<end credits>

01:01:54 – 01:02:19

Dexter Areak and Damian Enoogoo

[Laughing]

DA

We are trying to save seals here man

DE

Save seals? We try to kill seals