



# PIVUT

ISSUE 1 / SEPTEMBER 2007

FANTASTIC BEINGS  
FROM ARCTIC STORIES

2 STORIES ABOUT  
ARCTIC GIANTS

&

QALLUPILLUIT  
BEINGS OF THE OCEAN DEPTHS



Qikiqtani Edition

# PIVUT

# ISSUE 1 SEPTEMBER 2007 CONTENTS

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**The Qallupilluit**  
*Strange Beings from the Sea Depths*



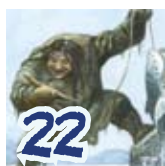
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**Inukpasuksuk**  
*The Giant that Adopted a Human*  
*\*Versions of this story are found in many regions of Nunavut. The version presented here is based on a story that was told by Nakasuk (Netsilingmiut) to Knud Rasmussen and published in 1931.*



**Inukpasarjuk**  
*The Giantess that Married a Man*  
*\*This version is based on a story recorded in the Cumberland Sound region by Franz Boas and published in 1901.*

# Welcome to the first issue of Pivut!

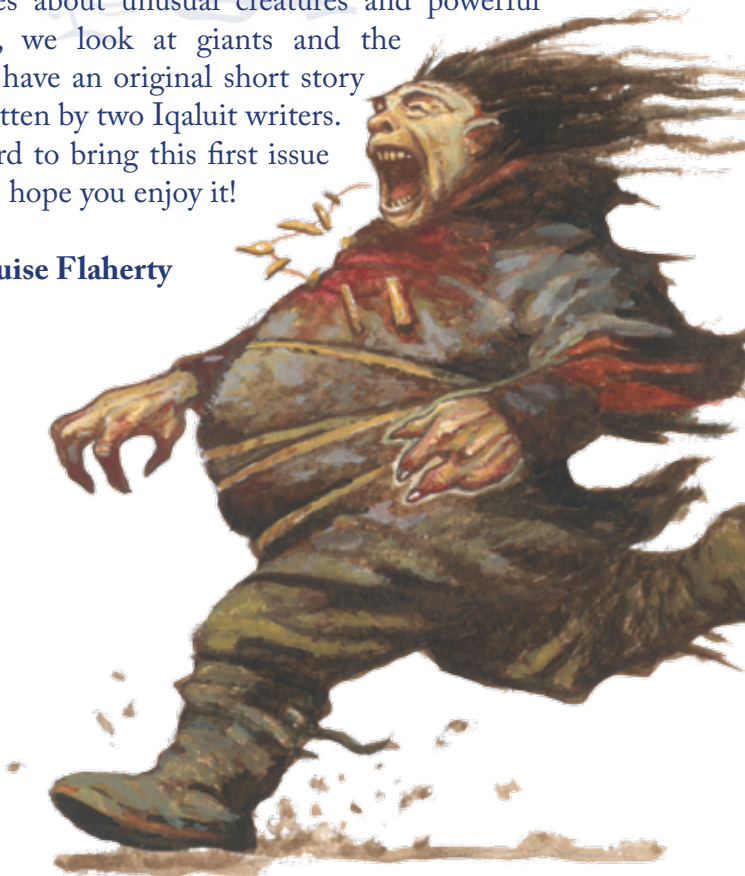
This magazine is for you--the youth of Nunavut. We want Pivut magazine to be a place to share stories, experiences, cultural knowledge and just about anything else you want to read about or share. To do this, we need to hear from you--yes, you! We want to hear what you think about this issue and what you want to see in future issues. You can help shape this new magazine by emailing us at [youth@qia.ca](mailto:youth@qia.ca).

The Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA) and the Nunavut Bilingual Education Society (NBES) developed Pivut magazine as a way to support literacy in Inuktitut and English and to promote Inuit culture. With feedback from readers like you, Pivut will be able to promote and preserve the things that are important to people in Nunavut.

This first issue focuses on supernatural beings from traditional stories. In all the regions of Nunavut, elders and hunters have shared stories and experiences about unusual creatures and powerful beings. In this issue, we look at giants and the qallupilluit. We even have an original short story about a qallupilluk written by two Iqaluit writers.

We worked hard to bring this first issue of Pivut to you and we hope you enjoy it!

**Neil Christopher, Louise Flaherty  
and Becky Kilabuk**  
*Managing Editors*



# QALLUPILLUIT

## STRANGE BEINGS FROM THE SEA DEPTHS

*Researched and written by Neil Christopher  
Illustrated by Larry MacDougall*

In many coastal regions of the Arctic, Inuit have described a strange race of beings that live in the sea. There are different names for this unusual race, but they are most commonly called qallupilluit (singular: qallupilluk). Qallupilluit are said to have bodies like those of a human, but with slimy, bumpy skin like a sculpin. Some say these beings have large, webbed hands and faces that are distorted by two bulging eyes and an ugly, upturned nose. But, there are too many descriptions of these beings to be certain of what they look like. Some Inuit who have witnessed these creatures even say that they wear jackets made of eider duck feathers with huge hoods to put their victims in. Many people fear the qallupilluit because it is said that they steal children who play near the pack ice and adults who fall into the water while boating. Those who are taken are placed into the qallupilluk's huge hood and never seen again. Some storytellers have said that these beings used to be common along the Arctic coast, but now the qallupilluit's numbers have declined and only a few are left.

*The editors of Pivut magazine are excited to be able to present an original story about one of these strange creatures, written in English and Inuktitut by Rachel A. Qitsualik and Sean A. Tinsley. We hope you enjoy it as much as we have!*



# The QALLUPILUK

F O R G I V E N

*Written by Rachel A. Qitsualik and Sean A. Tinsley*

*Illustrated by Todd Lockwood and Wayne Reynolds*

**B**urning cold in the sky, the moon was round and full when the Qallupiluk emerged from the sea.

Bathed in silver light, the Qallupiluk hauled itself onto the ice at the water's edge, squatting among the pressure ridges that wound like shattered labyrinths along the shoreline. Its spines shed droplets of brine, shivering in the winter air — but never with cold, for the Qallupiluk knew nothing of temperature. Instead, the Qallupiluk shook as might a man or woman in the throes of disturbed slumber. In truth, it was dreaming, and its dreams were of that which it had never naturally possessed: form.

The Qallupiluk detested the very feel of form, since shape meant discipline, and discipline meant control. Of all the inuunngittut (the non-human beings), the Qallupiluk's kind most despised anything that threatened to burden them with the shackles of order. But this Qallupiluk knew that it was out of the water's sheltering darkness, and now on the open Nuna. There were different laws upon this, the Land; and of all domains, it demanded discipline.

The form the Qallupiluk dreamt of was that of a human, a girl that it had met many years ago. The dreamer pulled its seething flesh in tighter as it visualized

her, a breeding age female who had broken taboo one day, combing her long and lovely hair by the edge of an ice-crack. The Qallupiluk had pulled her in, then, swimming deep with her — a foolish thing to do. Nothing but dead eyes had met the Qallupiluk's own in the gelid depths, the girl having either frozen or drowned to death before the slightest whiff of her life might be sampled. Mistakes did happen. The fragility of human life was something that the Qallupiluk had never been able to fathom.

Now, the Qallupiluk dreamt, and it dreamt of her form. Such dreams were not entirely of the human stuff, for these ran like roots into the Nuna, where they drew upon timeless wells of strength. Such strength came trickling upward, to roil like curdling milk in the Qallupiluk's hollow breast. There, it was poisoned with memories of hatred; with condemnation and wrath. There, the strength of the Nuna reshaped the Qallupiluk, according to the latter's will, into the form of the long-dead girl. It seemed that the Qallupiluk was very still for a time, perhaps even asleep; and when it again moved, it stood upon human feet. A girl's dark eyes examined the smooth skin of a girl's amber hands, shortly before those same hands tugged at the hem of

human garments. The Qallupiluk saw raven hair at play in the wind, and it shivered at the feel of those same locks affixed to its own head. It knew that it was now fully clothed in human form, in the dream of a girl who lived no longer. It also knew that its mask was near-perfect, but for breath: There was no vapour in the moonlight, for the Qallupiluk's false lungs could do nothing to simulate the girl's anirniq — the life-breath that had been hers alone.

But how pretty I am, the Qallupiluk thought, and it laughed with the sound of sundered ice.

The final details had taken shape, and the Qallupiluk stood as a girl fully clothed in strange garments of fur and fawn. The Qallupiluk immediately shook its head (the girl's head), knowing that it was not remembering the clothing correctly. How could it, never having needed such things? But perhaps, in the gloom of winter, such rags might trick even human eyes. It paused, reaching one hand in back of it, to check for a hood: This, too, was ill-wrought, being vast and sac-like and more than a little lopsided. Still, it would have to do in the hours ahead.

The Qallupiluk turned inland, taking a moment to get its bearings, whereupon its girl's lips smiled. To the northeast, it knew, was the camp. The humans lived there, for they had settled near the coast that was the Qallupiluk's own. The Qallupiluk had endured them for less than a month, though every hour of their presence had seemed like a cycle of the moon. Even in the depths, the Qallupiluk had been assailed by their emotional stench — by hope; by love; by despicable joy. The stuff of their laughter had penetrated even the deep shadow, rasping at the Qallupiluk to the point of pain.

Yet these same humans had given the Qallupiluk a gift, of a sort.

Three days ago, a pack of humans had come down to the sea ice. Whatever they had been doing (catching fish, washing, or something altogether different; the Qallupiluk couldn't have cared less), they had made the mistake of allowing one of their spawn to play near an ice-crack. And while this child had sat singing to herself, the Qallupiluk had drawn near, listening from below, waiting for any little violation of taboo that might have allowed it to leap and seize the human calf. No such violation had occurred — until the child had walked away. Even as the child had left the ice-crack, the Qallupiluk had felt a ripple in the strength of the Nuna, hearing the child uttering the words:

"I wish I saw a Qallupiluk . . ."

Since the time of those foolish words, the ancient laws of taboo had lent the Qallupiluk the necessary strength to seize that child. For three days, such strength had gathered, and now — under this gravid moon — the Qallupiluk would seek out its prize.

As a girl, the Qallupiluk walked, and soon its legs were almost steady in the snow.

It was not long before the camp was within sight, marked by the multiple domes of snow in which wintering humans dwelt. Most, the Qallupiluk noticed, were aglow with the flames that humans so carefully cultivated against the cold. Further, the Qallupiluk saw dark, boulder-like spheres at the edge of the camp, and knew that these were most likely dogs. The Qallupiluk was wary of them, even though it feared neither tooth nor tip of spear. Instead, it was concerned that the beasts might raise an alarm. They might yet alert the rare ones among the humans: those "half-hidden" who possessed the power and knowledge to strike down even the Qallupiluk's kind.





Struggling to maintain its false form, the Qallupiluk raised its eyes to regard the Aqsarniit, whose emerald streams of light ever undulated across the dark dome of the sky. The Qallupiluk whistled then, airless, without sound or vapour, sending forth its intent like a lengthening shadow. Its will stole softly across the human camp, and with it went the power of sleep. By the time the Qallupiluk ceased to whistle, it knew that all creatures in that camp — including the wretched dogs — had fallen into deepest slumber.

The Qallupiluk could already smell the taboo violator, the child who had wished to “see a Qallupiluk” by the ice-crack. The scent of transgression, more delicious than freshly spilt blood, indelibly marked the iglu in which the child slept. Now loping, not at all like the dead girl it resembled, the Qallupiluk made its way there in great strides.

Finally standing by the snow-dome in which it was sure to find the child, the Qallupiluk paused. It would not creep in like some penitent guest, but instead prepared itself to rend the dome asunder. It spread its arms, gathering the strength to do such, when it was startled by a voice:

“You have no breath.”

The Qallupiluk was not only shocked by the fact that there was someone yet awake in the camp, but by the language in which the words had been spoken — for the statement had been in Kiigutigiiik, the secret tongue that only the inuunngittut and the half-hidden know.

The Qallupiluk wheeled, but saw only a dog. The canine, whose coat was coloured as of rusty rocks, sat watching the Qallupiluk with eyes of palest yellow. It sat on its haunches, neither threatening nor cowering, while the dogs around it slumbered.

“You have no breath of your own,”

the dog repeated, again in Kiigutigiiik. Its pale eyes did not blink.

“What speaks to me,” the Qallupiluk asked in the same tongue, “that resists my will?”

“A dog,” the dog said.

“No dog,” the Qallupiluk said, “but a liar. You possess strength. You are hidden.”

“I am a dog,” the dog said.

The Qallupiluk was silent for a time, while the wind made false locks dance about its head. Finally, it said, “Whatever you are, you will not interfere with my mission.”

“Mission?” the dog asked. It was perfectly still as it spoke, its eyes unblinking, unwavering. “What mission brings a Qallupiluk among Inuit?” it asked. “Have the depths grown too warm? Does the blood of seal and whale no longer offer sport?”

“Mock as you will, dog thing,” the Qallupiluk answered, “but my mission is a sacred one. A cleansing one.” Then the Qallupiluk pointed at the iglu next to it, saying, “Here is a human calf who has violated taboo. I am authorized to act upon her. The Nuna demands it.”

“Is it the Nuna’s demand?” the dog asked. “Or your own?”

The Qallupiluk said nothing, but stood staring at the dog with hateful human eyes.

“Consider the path you tread,” the dog went on. “There is correct and incorrect behaviour — yes. But woe to the one who takes up the burden of executioner as though it were a gift. It is a little thing, the forgiveness that humans practice amongst each other. But it has strength.”

The Qallupiluk laughed with the sound of splintering shale. “There is no strength in little things, dog,” it said. “If we are to do battle, then come.”

"I do not bring conflict," the dog said. "I bring you forgiveness."

Something seemed to well within the Qallupiluk, then, a poison that it barely understood, but nevertheless blinded it with the rage it spawned. The empoisoned strength seem to spill from the Qallupiluk, so that its fury nearly blew the adjacent iglu apart. Not pausing for a moment, the Qallupiluk leapt down into the sunken floor of the devastated home, invisible tendrils of sense reaching out. There was a human family here, all stilled by the Qallupiluk's black will; still asleep among the bits of shattered snow-wall. The human calves were many, male and female, and the Qallupiluk would not have been able to tell one from another, were it not for the distinct stench of a taboo violator. The smell hovered over one girl-child no higher than a woman's waist. This one, the Qallupiluk plucked from her bed without hesitation, shuddering at the exotic scent of her life. With a physical strength far greater than that of the body the Qallupiluk currently imitated, it took little effort to fit the slumbering girl into its vast hood.

With the taboo violator securely in place, the Qallupiluk leapt from the iglu, ready for imminent attack. But the dog, good as its word, was gone. The camp was utterly still. Such facts, rather than putting the Qallupiluk at ease, somehow agitated it all the more, making it eager to regain the sea's embrace. So it ran, in great vaulting strides, as though its form were that of a colossus rather than a girl. It ran with something akin to panic, accelerating as it went, for it sensed something of ill omen in the way things had gone with the dog.

In the deep black, it thought, she's mine. Like the one whose skin I wear. Like the ones before her. As with all the taboo violators . . .

Its mind aw whirl with shadowed

thoughts, the Qallupiluk's discipline began to erode; and as the snowfall thickened, the Qallupiluk's run became something more like a shamble. By the time the brash of ice dividing its home from the Nuna came into sight, the Qallupiluk could see that its fingers were no longer distinct. Its flesh had grown dark and piscine, stretched across spinous fins like those of the kanajuq, or sculpin fish. No matter. It alternately scrambled and picked its way past the pressure ridges, until patience at last saw it to the water of an ice-crack.

The Qallupiluk placed one fin-like foot into the water of ice-crack, before it was startled by the cry of the child in its hood. The Qallupiluk grinned a liplless grin, then, at first certain that the taboo violator had awakened and now understood the doom before her.

But the child was not truly crying: She was singing — in the language of Kiigutigiiik.

And the water was gone.

The Qallupiluk cried out, discovering that its foot had become locked into an ice-crack that no longer existed — for the song of the child upon its back had frozen it solid. The Qallupiluk then felt the tiny hands of the same child, twin fluttering touches, as their palms came against its skin. And at the touch of the child, an azure flame seemed to erupt from the Qallupiluk's hood, its light surrounding the Qallupiluk like a thing alive.

The calf! The Qallupiluk screamed within its mind, even as its mouth loosed a true scream; for the blue light, the flame that emanated from the child, was a qaumaniq, the aura wielded by the half-hidden. This child, then, was an angakkuq — how had the Qallupiluk not seen it before?

The child's qaumaniq seemed to assail the Qallupiluk from all sides, as dogs will harry a bear; and the pain of the

angakkuq light bit like thousandfold teeth. The Qallupiluk fell, and merciful blackness engulfed it for a time. When it was again conscious of its surroundings, it found that its human shape had dissolved, leaving it in blissful formlessness. The water of the ice-crack was liquid once again, and the sea seemed to beckon. The child angakkuq had departed.

The dog had returned, sitting, watching with its eyes of palest yellow.

"Laugh at my weakness," the Qallupiluk said. "I know that's what you've come to do."

"No," the dog said, "I've come to deliver the message of my master, the child you would have taken. She is an angakkuq, as you have learned to your agony. But you must also know that she is the daughter of the girl you took by the ice-crack years ago. She bears her mother's name, and therefore something of her mother's anirniq, that life-breath which you would have stolen."

"So this is revenge," the Qallupiluk said, and it chuckled without humour. "What now, spirit-helper? Do you finish me here? Or am I to be the angakkuq's next slave?"

"She would never have you as a helper," the dog replied, "and your destruction would not satisfy her. I have come to place her command upon you, Qallupiluk: that you are to return to the sea, to throw yourself upon the mercy of Nuliajuq. The Deep Mother will be your judge."

The Qallupiluk's laughter was pained. "Then I am destroyed," it said. "The Mother cannot forgive me. I have slain the whales for pleasure, the seals for sport. And they are her children."

The dog stood up, its eyes burning. "You," it answered, "who use 'sin' as an excuse to commit evil, now claim to understand the workings of forgiveness? The Deep Mother was a girl once, and understands more of human ways than you might guess. This is your punishment, Qallupiluk: to have what you have denied others."

"Forgiveness!" the Qallupiluk cried out, just as the power of the angakkuq took hold of it, driving it toward the sea. "What strength is there in such a little thing?"

But the dog was gone.

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# ARCTIC GIANTS

*Researched and written by Neil Christopher • Illustrated by Larry MacDougall*

**I**nuit storytellers have always shared stories about giants. It seems that many years ago, when the Arctic was still young, giants lived and hunted on these northern lands. Some of these great beings are said to have been large enough to stride fjords and wade into the ocean to catch whales with their bare hands. Giants were few in number and often lived alone or in small family groups. According to the stories, these massive beings were intolerant of their own kind and sometimes violent battles erupted when they met. Inuit generally tried to avoid these colossal beings. However, at least one giant befriended Inuit and even adopted an Inuit man as a son. In Inuktitut, these great giants are called inukpasugjuit.

Knud Rasumussen, a Greenlandic ethnographer, interviewed Inuit across the North American Arctic during the Fifth Thule Expedition (1921-1924). He recorded stories of giants in all of the Inuit groups he visited. In his writings, he commented on the great role giants seemed to play in the imagination of the Inuit. According to Rasumussen, some Inuit he interviewed believed the giants were members of strange tribes, real people, who Inuit encountered in ancient times. More commonly, however, giants were explained as land spirits with supernatural powers.

Stories of giants vary from region to region. In this issue of Pivut, we present two exciting stories about giants. Both stories have been pieced together from several old ethnographic interviews and books, as well as current interviews of elders in Nunavut. We hope you enjoy these stories as much as we did.

*This first story tells about the adventures of a great giant, Inukpasuksuk, and the origin of the very powerful giant, Narssuk, who controls the weather. Stories in many regions talk of Narssuk being orphaned by a cruel act and going up to the sky. Once in the sky, he is more commonly referred to as Sila.*

# INUKPASUKSUK

## The Giant that Adopted a Human

*Researched and retold by Neil Christopher  
Illustrated by Michael Austin and Wayne Reynolds*

Long ago, there was a mighty giant who traveled across the Arctic and was known to many Inuit. This giant's name was Inukpasuksuk. During the time of this story, many giants lived in the northern regions of the world. Some of these giants were several times larger than a human and others were like walking mountains—these were the great giants. Inukpasuksuk was one of the great giants. It is said that he was so tall that the hood of his jacket reached the clouds. When he walked across the tundra he could stride across the largest rivers and easily wade through any lake.

One day Inukpasuksuk adopted an Inuit man as his son. Among Inuit storytellers of different regions, there is no consensus of what Inukpasuksuk's reasons were for this adoption. Perhaps it was because he was lonely or maybe it

was due to his feelings of guilt for the accidental death of an Inuit man. But, for whatever reason, Inukpasuksuk did adopt a human son and traveled throughout the regions of the North having many adventures. In some regions, the story of how Inukpasuksuk hunted the nanurluit—the giant polar bears—is often told. Other stories tell of how Inukpasuksuk waded into the cold ocean to catch walrus and whales. But one of these adventures was more significant than all others.

This story starts like most great stories, with an ordinary day. Inukpasuksuk and his son were traveling across the frozen tundra, not expecting adventure at all. When Inukpasuksuk and his human son traveled, Inukpasuksuk tucked his son under the lace of his kamik. You see, Inukpasuksuk traveled so

far in each stride that a human could never have hoped to keep up with him. So, Inukpasuksuk always placed his son safely in the laces of his kamik while they traveled.

During one of their walks, they came upon a huge, frozen lake. There, they met another of the great giants, who was fishing at the lake. This giant's name was Inuarulligasuksuk and he was even larger than Inukpasuksuk. Inuarulligasuksuk was an ugly giant, horrible to look at, with sharp, crooked teeth and carelessly made clothing. It seems that this powerful creature had easily punched through the thick ice to fish for the giant man-eating char that live in this lake<sup>1</sup>.

By the time Inukpasuksuk and his adopted son encountered Inuarulligasuksuk, they had been traveling for many hours and were quite hungry. As they approached the larger giant, they noticed that he had caught himself two giant char. These huge fish looked delicious to both of the hungry travelers, so they asked Inuarulligasuksuk if he would share a fish with them. But, giants are not known to be generous or kind to their own race. So, not surprisingly, Inuarulligasuksuk

refused their request for food. Again, they explained to Inuarulligasuksuk that they had been traveling for many miles and they were very hungry. But Inuarulligasuksuk was not interested in their story and said again that he would not share his fish with them.

Inukpasuksuk was angered by this ugly giant's refusal to share his fish. But, instead of insulting the larger giant, Inukpasuksuk took his son and calmly walked away from the selfish giant and his huge fish. When the two travelers were safely out of earshot, Inukpasuksuk lowered himself onto one knee so he could talk to his son. He whispered, "shout as loudly as you can that the giant has crooked teeth in his ugly mouth."

The adopted son was shocked at what his giant father had said and stared at his father in disbelief. Once again, Inukpasuksuk whispered, "insult the giant. Yell as loudly as you can that the giant is ugly and has crooked teeth."

The adopted son was understandably nervous about taunting a being of such size. He had seen the ugly giant's huge hands and had noticed his necklace decorated with human and animal skulls.

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<sup>1</sup> *Many stories throughout the Arctic describe a species of giant char that can be dangerous to Inuit who venture close to the shores of the lakes.*

This giant looked too dangerous to anger, so the adopted son pleaded with his giant father that he did not want to shout any insults. But, Inukpasuksuk repeatedly urged his adopted son to yell these insulting words at the selfish giant.

Not wanting to disappoint his father, the adopted son swallowed hard and began to yell at the top of his lungs, "The ugly giant has crooked teeth in his ugly mouth! The ugly giant has crooked teeth in his ugly mouth!"

At first, Inuarulligasuksuk just snorted and ignored the taunting of the little human. But, the adopted son kept repeating the insult, over and over and over again. Finally, the ugly giant became angry and, with a voice so loud it caused the lake ice to crack, he roared, "I have grown tired of your insults, you, who is no bigger than the pieces of meat rotting between my teeth!"

Furious, Inuarulligasuksuk, grabbed his two giant char and stomped across the ice toward the shore. Each step shattered the thick lake ice and splashed cold water everywhere. Inuarulligasuksuk threw down the giant fish with such force that they sunk deeply into the rocky shore. Without pausing, the ugly giant roared again and began to run toward Inukpasuksuk and his taunting son.

Inukpasuksuk turned to his son and said, "this ugly giant is too strong and large for me to beat. Hide your self well amongst the rocks. When we are wrestling sneak out and cut the tendons in his calf muscle. That will be the advantage I need to win." The adopted son was terrified but needed no further instruction. He scrambled across the rocks and found a space in which to hide.

As Inuarulligasuksuk ran towards the smaller Inukpasuksuk, he was a frightening sight. His eyes were wide with rage and his hands were clenched into huge fists. Each step taken by the enraged giant crushed the rocks beneath its feet and shook boulders loose. Though Inukpasuksuk was one of the great giants, he was no match for Inuarulligasuksuk, who was even larger and stronger.

When the two giants came together, the world shook. Each time one of their huge fists struck, it sounded like thunder. The adopted son covered his ears and trembled in his hiding place. Even the large boulders he was hiding amongst, began to move as if the world was shaking apart. Very quickly it became evident that Inuarulligasuksuk was stronger and would soon overpower Inukpasuksuk. Seeing his giant father in peril, the little son crawled out of



his hiding place and drew his knife. He waited until Inuarulligasuksuk was turned away from him with his feet firmly planted. As soon as he saw his opportunity, the little son ran towards one of the planted feet of Inuarulligasuksuk and cut deeply into his leg, just below the calf muscle. Even before the knife was removed from the leg, the little son felt the tendons release and coil themselves into the giant leg.

“A A a a h h h h h h !” Inuarulligasuksuk screamed. “Where is the coward that attacked me from behind?” The ugly giant spun around to look for the adopted son to crush. Luckily, the little son had already found a hiding place behind a rock.

Even with the tendons cut in one of Inuarulligasuksuk’s legs, Inukpasuksuk was still not strong enough to beat him. So, the little son crawled around the rocks until he got close to Inuarulligasuksuk’s other foot. Once again, he ran into the fight and cut deeply into the ugly giant’s leg. Again, the adopted son felt the tendon snap and coil up into the leg.

Inuarulligasuksuk collapsed onto Inukpasuksuk, momentarily pinning him to the ground. Inuarulligasuksuk could no longer stand and he knew he soon would be beaten. But, before Inukpasuksuk

could get out from under him and deliver a killing blow, the ugly giant howled, “Wife! I have been defeated!”

Inukpasuksuk worked himself out from under the massive giant. He then grabbed Inuarulligasuksuk and lifted him up over his head. With all this might, Inukpasuksuk threw the crippled giant against the rocky, frozen ground. When Inuarulligasuksuk’s body hit the ground, a loud crack could be heard for many miles. The tremendous force had broken Inuarulligasuksuk’s back. The ugly giant’s huge body twitched once, then became very still. Inuarulligasuksuk was dead. The adopted son walked over to his giant father and smiled with relief. But his relief did not last long because a moment later, before Inukpasuksuk could even catch his breath, the rumbling sound of giant footsteps was heard once again.

Both Inukpasuksuk and the little son looked towards the loud sounds and saw an enormous top knot (Inuit braid) coming over the hills. It was Inuarulligasuksuk’s wife. She was a voluptuous giant, almost as large as Inuarulligasuksuk had been. She covered the distance between herself and Inukpasuksuk quickly and seized him. The momentum of her body almost knocked Inukpasuksuk off of his feet. The



**Editor's note:** In this illustration, the artist gave the giants strange clothes and tattoos to suggest that the giants are from a unique race, with different customs than Inuit. In Nunavut, traditionally only women were tattooed.



Inuarulligasuksuk and Inukpasuksuk fighting to the death

giant wife was enraged by the loss of her husband. She swung wildly at Inukpasuksuk in an attempt to kill him. Her rage blinded her and she did not notice the small Inuit man sneaking on the ground towards her feet. With a quick slash, the little son cut the giant wife's leg tendons. The female giant screamed and sank to her knees in pain. Inukpasuksuk, seeing his opportunity, jumped on to the injured giantess and killed her.

Inukpasuksuk was breathing so hard that he could barely stand. But he knew they were not finished yet. He and his adopted son needed to check if these giants had any family members or children who might cause them problems in the future. So, Inukpasuksuk and his little son followed the giant woman's footprints back the way she had come. Her footprints were easy to follow because they had left huge depressions in the ground. Some of these footprints were even beginning to fill with water, becoming small lakes. Eventually, they came upon a giant child lying on the ground crying. It seemed that the giantess had been so panicked by the calls of her husband that she had not noticed that her baby had slipped out of her coat.

This orphaned baby was

named Narssuk. He screamed and cried for his mother as Inukpasuksuk and his son approached him. It was their actions that had orphaned this giant child. But, instead of taking pity on the orphan, Inukpasuksuk and his son walked away, leaving the orphan to his fate. Inukpasuksuk expected that the elements would take the giant child's life. However, the wicked choice of the giant and little son to abandon the orphaned baby, who could not take care of himself, turned the child into a powerful *tuurngak* (spirit) who went up to the sky.

Here Narssuk became Sila, the powerful *tuurngak* who eventually came to rule over the wind, rain and snow. He wears a caribou skin tunic and breeches and when he gets angry, he shakes his clothing, causing air to rush out from all the loose spaces. This causes violent storms, preventing Inuit from hunting or leaving their shelters. Narssuk has not forgotten his mistreatment and when he becomes angry at the behavior of Inuit, he releases great storms to punish and torment them. It takes a powerful *angakoq* (shaman) to travel to him and calm him so that the weather clears and Inuit can hunt once again. **P**



*This next story is pieced together from the Cumberland Sound area. It is about another great giant (inukpasugjuk) who marries an Inuit man. Female inukpasugjuits seem to be less common than males<sup>2</sup>. Inukpasarjuk, who is one of the great giants, mistakes whales for sculpin and polar bear for foxes. Mistaking huge animals for smaller species seems to be one of the characteristics of the great giants.*

# INUKPASARJUK

## The Giantess that Married a Inuit Man

*Researched and retold by Neil Christopher  
Illustrated by Michael Austin and Larry MacDougall*

Somewhere in the Cumberland Sound area, there lived a female giant named Inukpasarjuk. Inukpasarjuk was as tall as the island Kikertaqdjuaq. She could easily straddle fjords to look for whales, which she loved to eat. Because of her great size, the whales looked to her like little sculpin. She enjoyed looking for whales so much that she would straddle the fjords for hours and stare into the seawater looking for movement. When she saw the shadowy movement of a whale under the water, she would reach down and grab it. Her hands were so large that as she lifted the whales towards her mouth they fit in the hollow of her palm. Inukpasarjuk could put a

whole whale into her mouth. And she could swallow smaller whales whole, without even chewing.

One day the giantess saw a group of Inuit trying to catch a whale. The hunters had harpooned the huge animal and they were trying to kill it. Inukpasarjuk was interested in the little people and their hunt. She reached down and lifted them all up into her hands—the boat, the whale and the people. The whale was still alive and it began to thrash its tail back and forth. This little thing wriggling in her hands amused Inukpasarjuk. She giggled and giggled at the struggling whale, until it eventually stopped moving. Once the whale was dead, the

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<sup>2</sup> *Smaller female giants, sometimes referred to as ogresses or troll women, are called inugaruligasugjuits in Inuktitut. Female inugaruligasugjuits seem to be more common than male inugaruligasugjuits.*

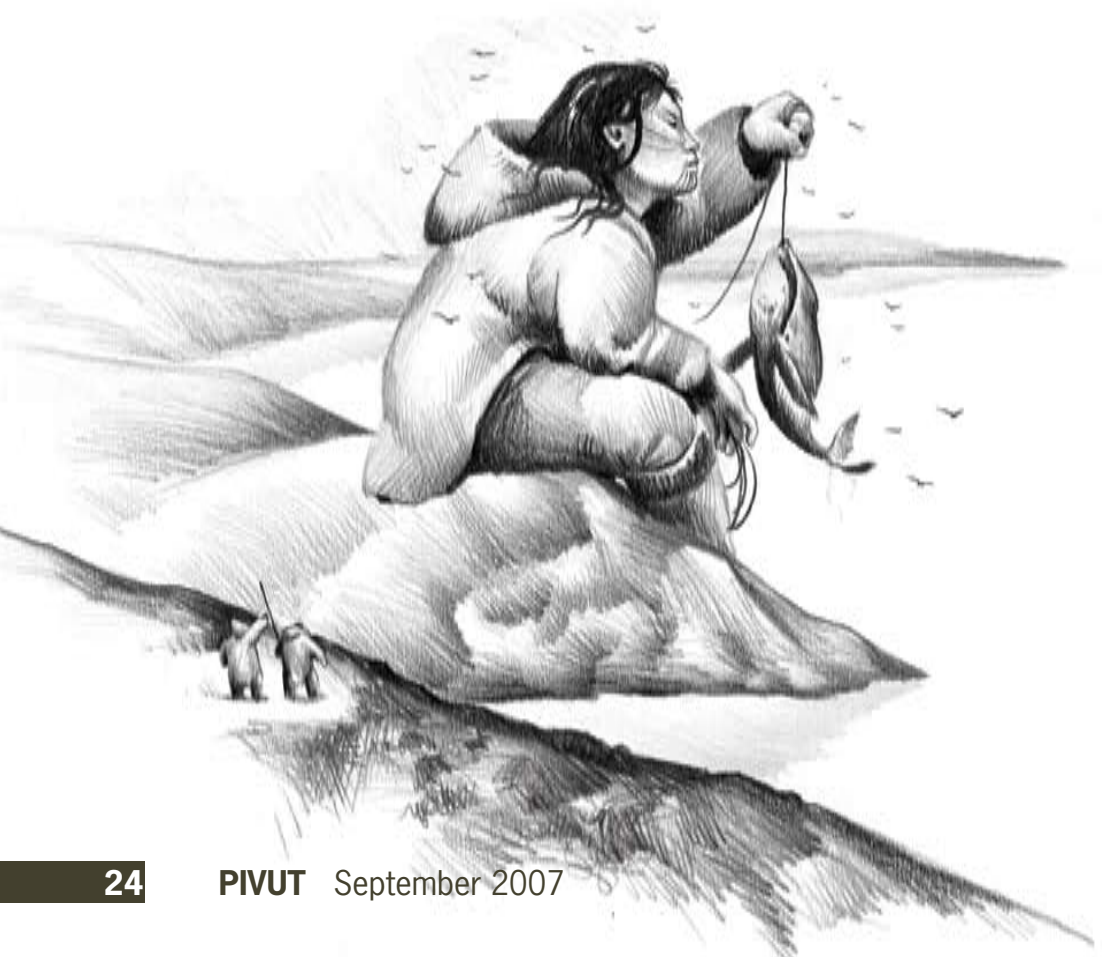


giantess placed it with the hunters and their boat onto the shore.

During one of the winters, Inukpasarjuk noticed a human hunter walking across the land in search of caribou. She liked the look of this little man and asked him to become her husband. How could he say no to a giant? The little hunter agreed to stay with the giantess and became her husband. One night, when Inukpasarjuk had become tired, she lay on the ground and whispered to her new husband, "I feel like hunting bear, but I am too tired and need a rest. Gather

stones and place them beside me. If you see a bear, take the stones and strike me in the head until I wake up."

Her husband was a little concerned about striking his giant wife with stones, but he followed her instructions. The little man began gathering large stones and placing them in a pile beside his wife's head. After a short time he noticed a large polar bear coming towards them. He hesitantly picked one of the smaller stones and tossed it at this wife's forehead. The impact of the stone did not wake





the sleeping giant. Again he picked up a stone, this time a little larger, and threw it harder at her forehead. Once again, the sleeping giantess did not even stir. The little husband was beginning to panic because the polar bear was getting closer. So he grabbed the largest stone and threw it with all his strength at his wife's forehead. This time, the giantess yawned and opened her eyes. She focused sleepily on her husband and asked him why he had wakened her.

"There is a large polar bear coming our way!" he yelled. "It's almost upon us!"

Excitedly, Inukpasarjuk got to her feet and looked at what her husband was pointing at. "What is that?" the giantess asked. "That's not a bear, it's a tiny fox."

The giantess's husband was shocked, as it was clearly a bear. In fact, it was one of the largest polar bears he had ever seen. Inukpasarjuk reached down and picked up the large bear easily and brought it close to her face to examine.

The enraged polar bear roared and lashed out with its claws. "Look at how small it is," Inukpasarjuk said with a giggle. "What a cute little fox!"

Becoming bored, the giantess tossed the polar bear away. It landed such a distance from them

that the giantess's husband did not see it land. Then she turned to her husband and said, "Do you see those two clumps of seaweed?" The little man looked where his huge wife was pointing and saw two islands in the ocean a distance from each other. Once again, the giantess had mistaken something large for something small. But by now her husband had grown familiar with this mistake. So, instead of correcting his wife, the little man told his giant wife that he saw the clumps of seaweed.

"When you see a bear large enough to fill the space between those clumps of seaweed, wake me," Inukpasarjuk said with a yawn. With that, she settled back down on the ground and went to sleep. The little husband thought this was a silly request, as the two islands were far apart and no bear could be that big. However, once again he began to gather stones, placing them close to her head. When the pile was full of large stones, he sat down on a rock and stared out at the ocean. Normally, it would have been difficult to stay awake through the night, but his wife's snoring was like rough stones being ground together.

Eventually, the giantess's husband noticed something moving in the dark seawater. Something was

surfacing between the two islands. It looked like a huge iceberg was slowly coming out of the water. The little husband realized that it wasn't an iceberg that was surfacing—it was a giant polar bear!

He scrambled to his feet and grabbed the largest stone in the pile. He hurled the stone with all his might at his wife's forehead. "Get up!" He screamed. "I have found your bear!"

His wife woke quickly and jumped to her feet. She shook the sleep out of her body and as her eyes focused on the giant polar bear, she squealed, "Indeed, that is a bear!" She reached down and placed her panicking husband inside the loop at the side of her boot, which was used for tightening the kamik strings. Once he was securely in place and

holding on tight, she reached down and picked up a huge boulder and ran towards the giant bear. When she got close enough, she hurled the boulder at the bear's head and killed it. Then she reached into the sea and dragged the dead bear onto dry land.

Throughout the night and well into the next day, Inukpasarjuk and her husband skinned and butchered the massive animal. When they were finished, they feasted on the fresh meat and cached the rest for later. Inukpasarjuk and her husband lived together for many years. They never had a house. Instead, they lived together on the land. Inukpasarjuk was so large that the sky was the only roof she ever knew. **P**