

ERIC JOAMIE (1956–2014)

Eric Joamie was born on the land at Tuapait in Cumberland Sound, outside of Pangnirtung, Nunavut. He was educated through Federal Day School and the territorial education system. He frequently emphasized the challenges of being educated in this “system foreign to his own society” (his own words), and yet he became a skilled interpreter who was involved with numerous community and research projects over the years. He worked at various times for the Qikiqtani Inuit Association, had an ongoing contract as interpreter and translator with the Hamlet of Pangnirtung, and established his own business, Joamie Communications and Consulting. Eric was also the Pangnirtung community researcher for our International Polar Year (IPY) Inuit Sea Ice Use and Occupancy Project (ISIUOP).

Eric dedicated countless hours to our *siku* (sea ice) project (2004–11), playing a key facilitating role in all local research activities, interpreting for local meetings and interviews, helping to develop and edit a local sea ice dictionary, and contributing to ISIUOP publications (Laidler et al., 2008, 2010, 2011; Pearce et al., 2009), presentations, and outreach (<http://sikutlas.ca>). I feel so privileged to have been able to work with and learn from him, and to have been able to connect with so many Elders in Pangnirtung because of him. He was a uniquely talented interpreter and had tremendous skill in bridging languages and cultures. He was so dedicated to his work and passionate about supporting any efforts to promote and enhance Inuit language and culture.

Eric took me on my first sea ice trip (May 2004), in which we had an incredible polar bear encounter. I also fondly remember joining his family for the fishing derby in April 2005, where Eric was helpful and encouraging as I tried to navigate the snowmobile on my own up to the fishing lake and back (and his niece had to take over a few times when I was frozen in fear at mountainous terrain or open water spots on the sea ice!). Throughout our work together we had many good moments for learning, knowledge exchange, and light-hearted jokes. I knew him as a dedicated family man, skilled hunter, talented interpreter, knowledgeable and caring person. He was a patient listener, always wanting to get all the nuances of what the Elders would share in order to interpret the concepts for me (and others) to understand. He was often quite quiet, but had a great sense of humour and would break into beautiful warm smiles when engaging with Elders and youth.

On 19 June 2014, Eric tragically disappeared while out on a hunting trip. He is survived by his wife Rosie, and five children (Shaun, Nina, Robert, Annie, and Albert). Eric will be deeply missed, and his is a great loss for his family, for Pangnirtung, for Nunavut, and beyond. Eric’s legacy will live on in the many lives he has touched, including the substantial contributions he made over the years to the *siku* project, the many other projects he worked on, and his work with the Hamlet. His life’s work was not just about



Eric Joamie on the sea ice in Pangnirtung Fiord, spring 2012. (Photo credit: Shaun Shoapik.)

translation, but about interpreting and sharing concepts between cultures, and between generations of Inuit, to help people understand each other and work together better.

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Gita J. Ljubcic
Department of Geography & Environmental Studies
Carleton University
1125 Colonel By Drive
Ottawa, Ontario K1S 5B6, Canada
Gita_ljubcic@carleton.ca