

Qikiqtaaluk (Baffin Island) Traditional Community Names

<u>English Names</u>	<u>Traditional names</u>	<u>What it means</u>
Pond Inlet	Mittimatalik	“Where Mittima is “
Clyde River	Kangiqtugaapik	“Nice small Inlet”
Qikiqtarjuaq	Qikiqtarjuaq	“Big Island”
Pangnirtung	Pannittuuq	“Bull Caribou”
Iqaluit	Iqaluit	“Place of Fish”
Kimmirut	Kimmirut	“Heel”
Cape Dorset	Kinngait	“Mountains”
Igloolik	Iglulik	“Place of houses”
Hall Beach	Sanirajak	“Back side”
Sanikiluaq	Sanikiluaq	“Sandy Kiluaq”
Resolute Bay	Qausuittuq	“Land with no dawn”
Arctic Bay	Ikpiarjuk	“Pocket”
Apex	Niaqunnguu	“Head”
Grise Fiord	Ausuittuq	“Land that never melts”

Long before the Europeans arrived, many places and areas of land in the Arctic already had Inuktitut names. When the Europeans arrived, many locations were given English names to reflect the names of their English sponsors. The first explorers had no sense of respect for the Inuit when they started naming land in English terms. I'm sure that it was easier to remain loyal to their sponsors than to adapt Inuktitut terms. Just as Inuktitut words are hard to pronounce when you are not used to them, English names are hard to pronounce if Inuktitut is your first language. Many English words are alien to Inuktitut speakers. Local people do not use scores of English place names today, as traditional names are more popular. Traditional place names have been around much longer, and have significance or a very obvious name that identifies the land or the area. Iqaluit means place of fish. Igloolik means a place with houses, and Ikpiarjuk resembles a pocket. The list goes on.

The locals attempt to say the English name versions, but find them hard to pronounce.

Grise Fiord may sound like “Greasy few” when pronounced by Inuktitut speakers.

Resolute may sound like “Raasalute” and “Arctic Bay may be pronounced as “Aatic Vai”. The name Clyde River may sound like “Clay Riva”. As you can see, as an Inuktitut speaker, it is much easier to use traditional names than English terms. Traditional names are easier to pronounce, and have been around much longer. The English terms do not have any significance to Inuit. Traditional names do.

All the communities are still known by their traditional names but English terms are generally officially used. Years ago, some communities started to change the names of their communities back to their traditional names. I take my hat off to Iqaluit (Frobisher Bay), Igloolik (always known as Igloolik), Sanikiluaq (Belcher Islands), Qikiqtarjuaq (Broughton Island), and Kimmirut (Lake Harbour). Resolute Bay is also known as “Qausuittuq” and Grise Fiord as “Ausuittuq.” The other communities are still known mostly by their English names. This is changing for the better.

By Elijah Tigullaraq, QSO, June 2010