

A Northern Life

Portraits from North Greenland



By NUKIGA



NUKIGA

Malu Rosing for **NUKIGA**
In the North Greenlandic spring of 2022

Graphics by Sika Filemonsén

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Qaanaaq

A Northern Life - Portraits from North Greenland is a meeting with people from the North Greenlandic towns Ilulissat, Upernavik, Qaanaaq, Uummannaq and Aasiaat. In this picture series from Greenland, NUKIGA puts focus on the people who live in these towns as well as their everyday life and dreams. NUKIGA is pleased to be able to present this series, which gives an insight into Greenland in 2022, and the people who go about their daily lives north of the Arctic Circle.

Thank you to everyone who participated and shared their stories.



QAANAAQ

Esther-Else Olsen. 1997.

I really like Qaanaaq and our culture. We are very sociable and friendly. The summer here is really good, we sail a lot, and generally we are outside more because it is much brighter. You don't really have a bedtime in the summer because the sun is out around the clock. It's great.

Winter is very different. Qaanaaq is different from other Greenlandic cities. When people from other places say that it is dark there in winter, it's nothing compared to Qaanaaq. Here it is dark for four months, which means that we spend more time inside. I spend a lot of time with my friends. We play games and go for walks on the ice when we have time for it. But when you're young, it can sometimes be difficult to think of something to do, because there's not really anywhere you can do here. So there aren't that many options.

I work in Pilersuisoq (the store), and when I'm not with my friends, I mostly just relax.

I'm not sure if I want to live here in the future or where I want to live, but my father has told me that he loves Qaanaaq and even though he's worked in other cities, he still wants to be in Qaanaaq and work to strengthen the town. I really like that idea.

Toku Oshima. 1975.

When the time comes and I want to go fishing, I just go fishing when I'm not out hunting. That's what I spend most of my time on.

In the summer and spring I work with machinery - tractor shovel, digging and so on. Otherwise, I'm out seal hunting. I was raised in a family of hunters, so it just came automatically to me. In summer, it's just a matter of filling up the freezer with all sorts of different animals. It is mostly for our own consumption and for the family.

I catch everything - seal and halibut, whales, walrus and everything. Trout and polar bear if I meet one as well. There aren't that many people left who live solely off of hunting, so you have to come up with new ways to get income. So I mostly get by on processing sealskin.

I live in a house we have renovated ourselves. We opened up our house because there is no place in town you can go to during the day. I've always dreamed of having a little tailor shop where people could come in and sew different things during the dark wintertime. I also volunteer teaching people how to sew in sealskin.

My mother is from Siorapaluk and my father is from Japan. My father is a hunter and still lives in Siorapaluk, where I visit him a few times a year. He said he wanted us all to get an education. So that we would always have something to fall back on if there is a bad catch, so I'm a trained electrician, but I live as a hunter. I also do everyday work with sealskin, and sometimes I help researchers with depth measurements in the fiord.

I don't have any children. I am married to Kim, who is a carpenter and contractor. Kim and I only have each other. We've been together for more than half of our lives, so we've grown up together. As long as I have him, it doesn't matter where I live. We have our own house and otherwise we spend most of our money on developing the city. That's pretty much all there is to say about me, there isn't much.



Rasmine Jeremiassen Normann, 1979 & Dan Normann, 1981.

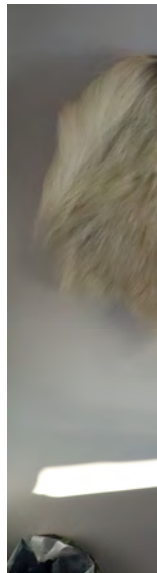
Dan

I was born here in Qaanaaq in 1981 and grew up here. I have a Danish father and my mother is from Savissivik, near Qaanaaq. My parents divorced when I was a child, so I used to go on holiday to visit my father in Denmark every year.

I have both a Danish first and last name and a North Greenlandic first and last name - Dan Normann and Sigdluk Daorana. Sigdluk is my grandfather's brother's name. He died as a child, and in Greenland we usually pass on the name from those who have died.

I have always wanted to be a teacher. A pilot or teacher. I have tried many other different things. I like to make films and take pictures, and I use that to show our culture and everyday life. I film our fishing trips and make videos with a story or narrative. I also try to speak as much as possible in my North Greenlandic dialect.

It's important for me to use and show our dialect, because there are very few of us who can speak the Qaanaaq dialect. My grandfather has told me that many of the words that were used when he was young have already been lost and that is still happening today. So better try to use it and film it.





Rasmine

I was born in a settlement south of Qaanaaq called Savissivik in January 1979, when it was completely dark. My parents lived as a hunter and a hunter's wife, but there was an outbreak of canine disease in 1988, so my mother thought that they probably wouldn't be able to live off hunting anymore. They then decided it was time to get an education. Then we moved to Qaanaaq that same year and they became supervisors at the school home.

I learned to speak Danish because I made two Danish friends when we moved to Qaanaaq. Not many people speak Danish here, so I started working as an interpreter for the optician and ophthalmologist, psychologists, and people who wanted to make documentaries and such. I travelled around the settlements as an interpreter from the age of 14.

I applied to attend the teachers' seminary and so did Dan, so we went to Nuuk together back then. We met in elementary school and started dating in the 10th grade. I am a year older, but he was very mature compared to our friends, and he had travelled a lot.

We also wanted to have children ever since we started our education, but we couldn't. So we accepted our fate and travelled the world instead. Then suddenly, she came, our little Charlotte. Now we have two.



Enok Oma. 1988 og Jørgen Kristensen. 1988.

We've been friends since we were kids, so we're used to each other's company. We are both from Qaanaaq and work primarily as fishermen.

We are out on the ice and fishing for up to ten days at a time, then we go home to Qaanaaq for approx. two days to be with our families, and then we return to the ice again.

When we're out here, we sometimes go on trips to other places after we're done with the day's work, but that's mostly when the weather gets a little warmer. This is how we live.

Enok: I have a wife and four children. I have been working as a fisherman since 2017 and I also go sailing in the summer and work as a fisherman.

Jørgen: I have a girlfriend and a child. In the summer I'm more in Qaanaaq and take time off to be with them. I started fishing last year when I was out with Enok.



UPERNAVIK

Kristian Olsvig Eliassen. 2006.

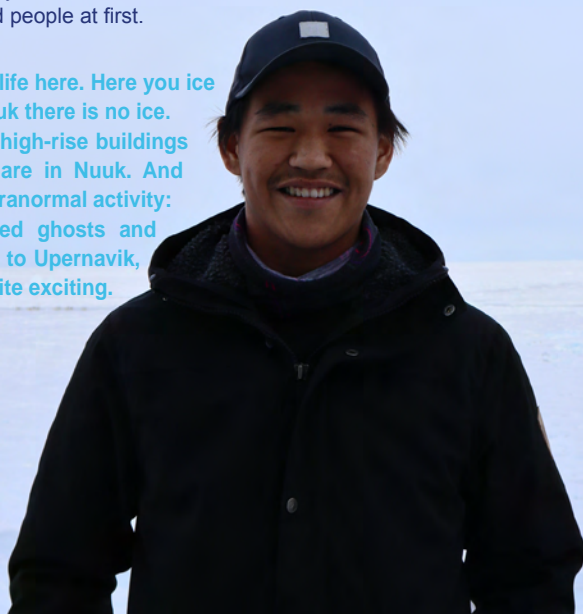
I was born in Ilulissat, grew up in Nuuk, and now I live in Upernavik, where I attend Majoriaq, which is the school for upskilling, to improve my grades. I was just supposed to be here in Upernavik on holiday to visit my aunt, but then I visited the school, and I just started here. I think it's pretty cool.

When I lived in Nuuk, I played a lot of football and was the captain of the team B67, but after I moved here I only play for fun at the sports centre. I've started playing the Inuit Games after I came here. It is a sport that practices traditional Inuit survival and hunting skills. It's a lot of fun, but I'm pretty new to it. Otherwise, I spend a lot of my time in the youth club "Northstar" with the others, where we play table tennis, foosball and that sort of thing. That's pretty much what I do in my spare time.

I have been working since I was 13, and I started fishing when I came here. At first it was tiring to be pulling in the long lines, but I also think it was cool, because I hadn't done it before. Unfortunately, I had to stop when I started at Majoriaq, because you go out for 5-6 days at a time, and it's difficult when you have school at the same time.

I think there is quite a big difference between the culture in Upernavik and Nuuk. For example, you speak very differently here than you do in Nuuk, so it was difficult for me to understand people at first.

You live a different life here. Here you ice fish a lot, but in Nuuk there is no ice. There are no large high-rise buildings here, which there are in Nuuk. And then there is the paranormal activity: I hadn't experienced ghosts and such before I came to Upernavik, but I think that's quite exciting.





Karina Fly. 2001.

I was born in Ilulissat, baptized here in Upernavik, and I grew up in both places. I have moved to Upernavik now to be with my family and my boyfriend, who I have been with for 5 years.

Right now I am in the process of making the embroideries for my Greenlandic national costume. I think it's really fun to make it myself. I'm always preoccupied with crafts, I just love to do it. When I'm not at school or at work, I spend most of my time working out at the fire station where I work.

I've always spent a lot of time at the fire station because my dad is a firefighter, and because I missed it, I went up there one day and asked if I could work as a firefighter, and then I got the job! I usually say that this is where my heart belongs, so in that way I am pretty much dad's girl and follow in his footsteps

I can imagine working as a firefighter in the future as well, but I have applied to start at the Social Pedagogical Seminar (SPS) in Ilulissat. I would like to work as a social worker to start with and maybe further on take an education as a kindergarten teacher.

I don't think I will live here in the future, I would rather live in a place where you can do different things. I miss being able to go to a cafe or a bar or work out at the gym and there really isn't anything like that here. I think I would rather live in Ilulissat, where my parents live now, but it is also not entirely unlikely for me to live here if there is a little more development in this town.

Lone Milling Rohleder. 1956.



I work at the school for upskilling called “Majoraq” a few days a week where I help young people improve their grades. I am very happy to be able to help, and I am very firm with them. I’m passionate about everything I do that way.

When I have time off from Majoriaq, I prepare to open my own little shop, which I want to establish in an extension to my house. My mother once had a kiosk there, which she ran for 25 years, and I want to sell second-hand things and cake, coffee and waffles straight from the iron. When the weather is right, people can sit outside and enjoy the view.

Actually, I had retired after many years as a primary school teacher and moved to Copenhagen from Ittoqqortoormiit after my husband, Ole, died. I still find little hearts from him here and there. They were our thing. I miss him very much.

Then I inherited the house here in Upernavik from my parents, and now I spend my time fixing it up. I also wanted to be with my atsa (aunt), Rosa, who also lives here in Upernavik.

A couple of times a year I commute to Copenhagen, where I have an apartment. It is rich to be able to do that. They are two very different worlds, but they are both my cultures, and I feel rich and privileged to be able to do that. If this doesn't make you feel lucky, I don't know what does. I am in a way connected to Upernavik and also a Copenhagener at heart when I am there.



Martin Anthonsen. 1964.

I started working as a catechist in 2004 and trained to become a catechist from 2005 to 2007.

In December 2021, I was asked if I would like to work as a priest here in Upernavik. I said yes. There hadn't been a priest in Upernavik since 2017, so I took on the task.

I take care of all the pastoral duties in the Upernavik parish, which also includes the settlements of Kullorsuaq, Nuussuaq, Nutaarmiit, Tasiusaq, Innaarsuit, Naajaat, Aappilattoq, Kangassuatsiaq and Upernavik Kujalleq.

I myself am from Kangassuatsiaq, and I am very happy to live in Upernavik. People have received me very well as a priest here. It makes me happy, and I strengthen myself on that.

I appreciate the stories in the bible - they are still relatable and I try to make them relatable for others too. I hope that I will continue to do a good job in the future.







Gabriella Broberg Hansen. 2002.

There are approx. 30 children here at the children's home, but not everyone is here right now; some are away in boarding school in Denmark or go to high school elsewhere in Greenland. I'm looking forward to everyone coming home again. I like living with the other children here and looking after the little ones, but it can also be quite annoying. It's like having younger siblings.

We play a lot of music here at the children's home. We do concerts and stuff like that. I play the violin. I chose it because I was once given an old violin as a gift from my grandfather. Right now I'm also learning traditional throat singing. Sometimes when we clean up, we practice throat singing and listen to throat singers.

I would like to go to school in Denmark in the future. Either to study to become a doctor or a midwife. I would like to work with that in the future. It is quite important for me to make my family proud, and it is important for Greenland because there is a shortage of doctors and midwives. Being a doctor or a midwife also means that I will have a better chance of creating a good and peaceful home.

One day I would also like to write my own book. It should be called "The freedom to choose to be oneself, if I don't choose the freedom to fly". I want to write about my life from start to finish. But I want to be old when I finish it, so it will be a long story I have to write.



Karina Sigurdsen Terkelsen, 1990 & Andreas Terkelsen, 1984.

I am an Uummannarmioq (a person from Uummannaq). Uummannaq is something very special - when I come here, my heart is filled. He is from Saattut, and we have moved there, so now we are Saattormiuts. I have a kiosk and Andreas is a fisherman. It's really good to be independent, because it gives us a lot of freedom.

When we lived in Uummannaq, our day was determined by my work as a senior assistant in Piareersarfik (former Guidance and Upskilling Center) with a fixed schedule, and I hardly ever saw my children. But now that I decide my own working hours, I can be with them more. For example, our oldest just started school, so when he is off at 12, he can just be with me for the rest of the day, and I can pick up the little one from kindergarten earlier if we decide to go on a trip during the day. It suits us very well.

There are also better conditions as a fisherman here. Andreas can sail in the summer, and the ice is better in the winter, so he can ride a snowmobile and dog sled there and fish from the ice.

The best thing about living in Saattut is that we have the freedom to say: "Today we want to go to Uummannaq and shop or go to a cafe", and then we drive there by snowmobile in 45 minutes. Or we go to Qaarsut and visit family.

In everyday life, Andreas goes out with a dog sled in the morning after he has taken the children to school and kindergarten and puts bait on the long line and sets it out. Then I go home to be a housewife and cook and wash dishes, and he fetches water. This is how we divide the tasks between us.

Uummannaq



ILULISSAT

Milan Skade. 2006.

Milans mom, Katrine:

Milan goes to Mathias Storch School here in Ilulissat, where he attends the special class.

He has cerebral palsy, but that doesn't stop him from doing the things he likes.

He wants to be a firefighter when he grows up, so he has written a big school assignment about the fire department. He visited the fire station here in Ilulissat where he spoke to the firefighters, taking pictures of their cars, and trying on a uniform. He finds everything the fire department does exciting.

Milan and his little sister Moni are always together. Hardly an hour can go by without them being together. She really likes to be outside, but Milan gets tired very quickly and needs to relax a bit.

He spends a lot of time doing handcrafts, such as beads and crocheting. And he is always happy to help me in the kitchen or cook for us by himself. He never gets bored.



Ane Sofie Lauritzen. 1975.

My name is Ane Sofie, but I'm just called Anso. I always have something to do now that I work both in the kindergarten and with our company where my husband and I take tourists on dog sledding trips. When my day is over at the kindergarten, I usually just have time to go home and change my clothes and then it's over to the dogs.

Having dogs means a lot to me. We have always had dogs in my family, and we would bring them with us when we moved. So it means a lot to us to stick to the Greenlandic lifestyle of going out into nature a lot. Especially in the summer, we do a lot of sailing, fishing, and hunting or longer trips in the mountains.

I was born in Uummannaq, and I have lived in Qeqertarsuaq and Qasigiannnguit. We moved to Ilulissat in 2013. There are many differences between people from town to town and from settlement to settlement and each place is special. We all have a common culture, but there are also many differences, just the dialects for example.



I think it is very important that we are open to differences. We will have to be welcoming to different cultures. We can't just be by ourselves. The world has been opened up, and we must become better at accepting it. Everyone is welcome at my place. That openness is very important, and I hope that there are more young people who feel that way.

This is how I raise my children myself. I tell them to go out and explore the world. And when they come back to work in Greenland one day, Greenland will benefit greatly from them. It is not only for their own sake but also for the sake of Greenland's future.



Belinda Lange. 1989.

I graduated as a tourist and Arctic guide in 2020. Before that I studied to become a teacher, but I stopped to go to Denmark and play sports. We are a very active family. It's almost like we grew up in the sports centre.

When I was studying to become a teacher, I suddenly felt very differently in my body. I was tired all the time, and when I was going to sleep, I couldn't feel my fingers or legs. So I went to the doctor who said nothing was wrong. But when I went to the doctor again a year later, it turned out that I had a brain tumor. So I was sent to Denmark to have it surgically removed. I was in Denmark undergoing treatment for approx. half a year. It was really difficult. A very very hard time in my life.

It was the most difficult period of my life. The doctor said I had four weeks to live. I couldn't talk, and I couldn't walk. I wasn't allowed to

exercise, and I couldn't eat. It felt like I was a child again. I had to learn everything all over again. Learning to eat, learning to walk, learning to talk.

It is important for me to be able to do sports. This is what makes me strong and makes me want to develop as a person. I think it's great that you travel a lot with the sports teams, meet a lot of people, and make a lot of friends. It gives you more energy.

I just started kayaking as well. I did it for the first time in Qaqortoq during my training as a guide. Shortly afterwards I was asked if I would like to take part in a competition and I came in second! It is very peaceful in a kayak with the sound of the waves and being so close to the sea. One feels a great respect for our ancestors. They have been very strong and brave. I would like to have a kayak myself so I can improve.

It was very hard. I was close to dying. But now I'm here. I have a job and I am doing well. I have moved back to Ilulissat and live with my Aanaa (grandmother). I am really enjoying myself here in Ilulissat after I moved from Nuuk. It just feels very peaceful here.



AASIAAT

Nukaaraq Petersen. 1995.

I was born and raised in Nuuk, where I lived in a children's home until I went to boarding school for a year in Denmark, and after that I moved home with my mother. Now I work as a hairdresser here in Aasiaat.

One of my friends just said to me: "You should be a hairdresser! I know you're going to graduate" and then I just thought "okay, I'll give it a try". Then I became a hairdresser.

When I applied to hairdressing school, I tried to cut my mother's hair. It was completely crooked. She was the first person whose hair I cut. I passed the exam on the 2nd of November and got my certificate on the 30th of November last year. My graduation hat is pink and is already up on the wall. It says Dreams Come True and my name, because I have dreamt of becoming a hairdresser for a long time.



Now I work in Cut in Aasiaat and specialize in hair colour. I started experimenting with bright colours three years ago when I was an apprentice. To start with, I tried it on myself, because Greenlandic hair is a bit annoying. It can be difficult to manage, and it is very different from Danish hair.

My boyfriend and I moved here in December 2017. I had to choose between an apprenticeship in Ilulissat or here. Then we chose Aasiaat because my boyfriend was born and raised here. His family, parents, and siblings live here, and I wanted to get to know them. We got engaged four years ago, but we are waiting to get married, because he is in Denmark right now.

I'm used to Aasiaat now - I feel safe here. In Nuuk we were bullied for being gay, but here it's only small children and not that often. I haven't experienced anything bad here. It's not that often you see homosexuals here holding hands and such, so most people are just curious.

We have never wanted to hide our relationship. This is our life, and if they want to bully us, it only makes us stronger. When I have time off, I'm mostly at home with my boyfriend, and I also knit. We eat with my in-laws during the weekend, so they're not alone.

We are still thinking about whether we should move to Denmark.

I would like to train as a beautician if we move to Denmark, and then I want to return to Greenland and open my own beautician and hairdressing salon, because we need more of them here.

We have also talked about trying to live in some of the settlements or the other towns where there is no hairdresser. So we are thinking Kangerlussuaq, Tunu (East Greenland) or in North Greenland. We don't know where. We just want to experience it.

Ulloriaq Rafaelsen. 2002.

I tried working with handcrafts for the first time in 2022 - I was 9 years old in the 4th grade. It was a leisure activity that I learned from Aksel Sandgren Brandt. He has always said that he saw something in me, so he has motivated me over the years.

I always try to innovate and make my figures stand out. It can take several days to make

one. I develop them along the way as I make them, and I often get the ideas just before I go to sleep or when I'm at work.

I have always dreamed of becoming a pilot, ever since I was little. I was supposed to start training in Kangerlussuaq as an AFIS operator, which was supposed to be my stepping stone to becoming a pilot, but after I became a student this summer I got epilepsy.

I can spend a lot of my time thinking about the future, but my epilepsy has meant that I currently have to think more about the present. Since I got epilepsy, everything has been turned upside down, and I have become very limited in what I can do and what options I have.

Before I got epilepsy, I was told I could be anything I wanted. Now suddenly I can't do things that I've always dreamed of and I'm slowly accepting that.

Now I have applied to Aalborg University to study to become a psychologist. I noticed that I like to explore people's behavior. People call me a good listener, and I find it interesting to listen to people. So for me, it was an obvious choice to become a psychologist. It lets you understand why people do what they do.



Bolethe (Bula) Kørschen Hendriksen. 1983.

I moved back to Aasiaat in October 2018 with my husband after living elsewhere for 13 years. We have lived here ever since.

The main reason we moved back to Aasiaat was because my parents moved back. I thought that maybe if we moved here, I would want to settle down and have children. Really get into the flow of this small town life without stress - I thought. Since we moved here, I have been self-employed with a few different companies. Right now we have a cleaning company, and I have a hair salon and some employees. So there is still stress and a busy life, but we have a lovely son now.

I see a lot of possibilities here in Aasiaat; I almost get stressed just thinking about how many possibilities there are, and I just want to get started on everything. It means everything to me to be able to give the town these new opportunities.

My dream of becoming a hairdresser started in the 90s when I knocked on my hairdresser, Ingeborg's, door and asked if I could help, just to be close to her because I looked up to her so much. I didn't want a salary, but she gave me DKK 35 an hour anyway. That's where it started. She was my mentor. She was a tough teacher, which is what I needed. I just absorbed everything.

I grew up without any close siblings, so I'm more or less an only child. I was a real daddy's girl and got almost everything I wanted. But then my mentor taught me that you have to work for what you want. Ingeborg is the root of all good things in my life.

Now I have bought the old building where I was an apprentice. When we went to see it, I got a big lump in my throat because this is where I started my education 20 years ago. It's incredible. That's where the journey started, and now we're back. Now we'll see if that gives me some peace of mind. I want to start my product series so that it can become a hair salon with its own brand and facial care line. That's a good dream.

Everything is possible, and that is what keeps us here. It's so easy and sometimes I have to pull on the handbrake.





Aannguaq René Jakob Jørgensen Hansen. 1992.

I got the name Aannguaq when I was 18 years old. It was a nickname that my aanaa (grandmother) had given me, and I wanted a Greenlandic name, so I chose that instead of the Danish names I had before.

Since I was a child, I have been very interested in making films, and I always told my family that my path was different. I played a hunter in the film "The raven and the Seagull" (Lykkelænder) by Lasse Lau and helped in the post-production as a jack-of-all-trades. There I gained a lot of insight into film production and how it works. I worked more in-depth with what I learned about being a producer and producer assistant.

My family has said that it can be difficult to make a living making films here in Greenland, but when I meet a challenge or I am told that there is something I cannot do, it whets my appetite, and I will do whatever I can to achieve it. I use it as motivation.

I feel like a lot of people are waiting for something to happen. But I think that if we are to develop and do something good for the country, then we have to take matters into our own hands and just do it.

Right now I am also working on a documentary that will show how people who have been abused have been able to move on. Even if you have been the victim of abuse or have been abused, you can move on as a whole person. My business partner and I would like to shed light on the subject and show that although it will always stay with you, you can learn to live with it.

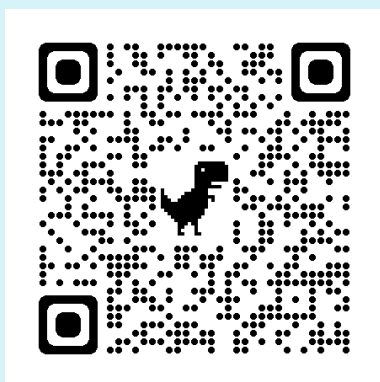
I myself was abused as a child and teenager. I want to show that you can take the next step forward. The documentary does not necessarily have to be about me, so we are also looking for others who have been abused and who have moved on. We started the process last year and are working on it now. It may take four or five years to finish such a project.

We would like to give people who have experienced abuse the opportunity to talk about it in a community, and we will make preventive measures with information on what to do if you have experienced it, or know about it. Where to go and who to turn to.

Ilulissat



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NUKIGA



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