

# #9256

# INUIT CLIMATE AND FOOD

BENCHMARK MEDIA  
1999  
Grade Levels: 5-9  
14 minutes



## DESCRIPTION

The general lifestyle of a modern Canadian Inuit family is contrasted with that of Inuit life in the 1940s. Archival footage shows food-gathering and adaptations to climate. Includes some facts about the area's geography, climate, and animal life.

## ACADEMIC STANDARDS

### Subject Area: United States History

- Standard: Understands cultural and ecological interactions among previously unconnected people resulting from early European exploration and colonization
  - Benchmark: Understands the immediate and long-term impact of Columbus' voyages on native populations and on colonization in the Americas (e.g., Columbus; interactions with indigenous peoples, the Columbian Exchange, religious influences)

### Subject Area: Geography: Environment and Society

- Standard: Understands how physical systems affect human systems
  - Benchmark: Knows the ways in which human systems develop in response to conditions in the physical environment (e.g., patterns of land use, economic livelihoods, architectural styles of buildings, building materials, flows of traffic, recreation activities)
  - Benchmark: Knows how the physical environment affects life in different regions (e.g., how people in Siberia, Alaska, and other high-latitude places deal with the characteristics of tundra environments; limitations to coastline settlements as a result of tidal, storm, and erosional processes)

### Subject Area: Geography: Places and Regions

- Standard: Understands the physical and human characteristics of place
  - Benchmark: Knows the physical characteristics of places (e.g., soils, land forms, vegetation, wildlife, climate, natural hazards)

### Subject Area: Technology

- Standard: Understands the relationships among science, technology, society, and the individual
  - Benchmark: Knows ways in which technology and society influence one another (e.g., new products and processes for society are developed through technology; technological

changes are often accompanied by social, political, and economic changes; technology is influenced by social needs, attitudes, values, and limitations, and cultural backgrounds and beliefs)

### **Subject Area: Visual Arts**

- Standard: Understands the visual arts in relation to history and cultures
  - Benchmark: Understands how factors of time and place (e.g., climate, resources, ideas, technology) influence visual, spatial, or temporal characteristics that give meaning or function to a work of art



### **INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS**

1. To compare their lives to that of the Inuit in the far North.
2. To understand how geography and climate affect the way people live and work.
3. To compare the vast changes in the way the Inuit lived only 50 years ago and today.
4. To appreciate the cultural values of this Native American people, the Inuit.

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Some 45,000 Inuit live in Alaska, 25,000 in Canada, and 46,000 in Greenland. This video documents, in rare archival footage, how the Inuit lived 50 years ago—much as they had for centuries—and today in a small settlement in Eastern Canada. These native people call themselves Inuit, which means “the people,” as they prefer to be known, rather than as Eskimos.

The Inuit are descended from Thule whale hunters who moved inland about one thousand years ago. Contact with Europeans probably first occurred when Norse colonies were established in Greenland about 985 A.D. European whalers in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century brought manufactured goods to trade, and infectious diseases, which had a devastating effect. The Inuit were highly specialized hunters and fishers. Religious practices were largely rituals regulating the close relationship of humans with animals.

Today, hunters and fishers use modern equipment and weapons. Other sources of income are governmental assistance, mining jobs, and Inuit arts and crafts. Living standards and political autonomy have dramatically improved.

### **BEFORE SHOWING**

1. Using a wall map, ask students to locate the Northwest Territories in Canada. Recently a semi-autonomous territory, carved from the Northwest Territories had been set aside for the Inuit, and is now called Nunavut. Our story takes place in Iqualutt, a small Inuit settlement which is at the head of Frobisher Bay, just north of Hudson Strait off the Labrador Sea. Iqualutt, itself, may not be on the map.
2. Ask students to contribute to a discussion about what life would be like in such a far northern climate. Where would food come from? Where would materials to build homes come from? Are there schools for education? What is the home environment like? What do they do for entertainment?

3. The Inuit's attitude towards their unforgiving environment may surprise some. It is said that the Inuit, of all Canadians, has maintained that they are only one of the land's many elements, and certainly not the most important. The Inuit has learned over the ages how to adapt to, and survive in, this harshest of all climates. Discuss.
4. Discuss how climate and geography affect people's lives and work in your local area. Expand the concept to different climatic regions of the country. When they view the video, ask students to note how climate and geography actually do affect the lives of the Inuit.

## AFTER SHOWING

### Discussion Items and Questions

1. Stimulate class discussion by making two columns, one describing different aspects of Inuit life and the other describing aspects of the students' lives. How are they similar and different? Students might discuss school, a grandfather's life style, food, literacy, after-school and outdoor activities, climate and seasons, shopping and clothing.
2. Discuss how geography affects people's lives. Ask students to list the ways that geography has affected this Inuit family's life and those of other Inuit people.

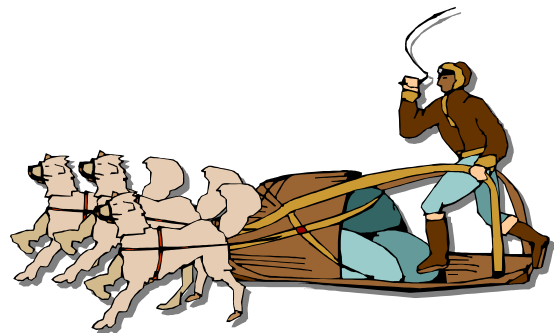


### Applications and Activities

1. Using the information from the columns in #1 of Discussion Items and Questions, have students research the Web sites provided below for further information on these topics, and others of possible interest. Have the students report on their findings.
2. Divide the class into groups. Ask each student to pick a product seen in the video, such as lumber in a wooden house, food in the supermarket, a synthetic fabric jacket, etc., and to prepare class presentations on how that product is imported over what routes and carriers. How does geography affect what products are imported and how they get there?
3. Divide the class into groups. Ask students to plan a trip to Iqualutt, using Internet information, maps, Canadian tourist information, tourist guides, books or articles, and the video. What would they see or do? How would they travel? What time of the year would they plan to travel and why? What would the weather and the vegetation be like at that time of year? What clothes would they bring? What recreational activities would they plan to enjoy? What kind of handicrafts and arts might they see?

## SUMMARY

The life of a modern Inuit family in arctic Canada is contrasted with that of their grandfather's time (extensively recorded in rare archival footage), which has not changed much for the Inuit in over 2,000 years. The family consists of a grandfather, who lived in the days of the archival footage 50 years ago, his daughter, who is an outdoor guide for tourists, and her daughter, who attends school.



The grandfather, as had the Inuit for thousands of years, lived in an igloo, hunted seal with a harpoon, and traveled by dogsled in the winter. In the summer, he lived in a sealskin tent, fished with a spear, collected birds' eggs and berries, and walked across the land.

In the past thirty years, the wooden house with running water, and shopping in a supermarket has replaced all that. The granddaughter attends school, studies in 3 languages, French and English (whose peoples came here some 200 years ago), and the native language, Inuktitut.

## RELATED RESOURCES



### Captioned Media Program

- The Arts of the Eskimo: An Arctic Adventure #8620
- Eskimos: A Changing Culture (The Cup'ik of Alaska) #3120
- Inuit Culture #9257
- Inuit Shelter and Heat #9258
- Inuit Survival Skills #9259



### World Wide Web

The following Web sites complement the contents of this guide; they were selected by professionals who have experience in teaching deaf and hard of hearing students. Every effort was made to select accurate, educationally relevant, and "kid safe" sites. However, teachers should preview them before use. The U.S. Department of Education, the National Association of the Deaf, and the Captioned Media Program do not endorse the sites and are not responsible for their content.

- **ESKIMO—ARTCTIC STUDIES CENTER**

<http://www.mnh.si.edu/arctic/features/croads/eskimo.html>

From the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History, explains how the unity of Eskimo culture is enhanced by many commonalities, including adaptation to arctic and subarctic maritime environments.

- **INUIT OF CANADA**

[http://itk.ca/sitemap/I\\_heritage/header\\_iheritage.html](http://itk.ca/sitemap/I_heritage/header_iheritage.html)

Describes the Inuit's 5,000-year heritage, enduring traditions, a new political vision, and a sustainable future. Provides links.

- **THE INUVIALUIT OF THE WESTERN ARCTIC**

<http://www.civilization.ca/aborig/inuvial/lande.html>

Displays photographs of the Inuvialuit land, wildlife, villages, and other essentials. Contains many other topics such as Survival, From Ancient Times to 1902, Isolation of the Inuvialuit, and many others.

- **INUIT**

<http://www.mce.k12tn.net/indians/reports3/inuit.htm>

For lower grades, explains the Inuit habitat, dress, food, customs, and other needs for survival in their environment.