

#9258

INUIT SHELTER AND HEAT

BENCHMARK MEDIA

1999

Grade Levels: 5-9

14 minutes



DESCRIPTION

Archival footage helps reveal the contrasts between Inuit housing, heat sources, and clothing in the 1940s and now. Includes scenes of life in an igloo and hunting seals in winter and spring.

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)

Subject Area: Geography: Places and Regions

- Standard: Understands the physical and human characteristics of place
 - Benchmark: Knows the causes and effects of changes in a place over time (e.g., physical changes such as forest cover, water distribution, temperature fluctuations; human changes such as urban growth, the clearing of forests, development of transportation systems)

Subject Area: Technology

- Standard: Understands the relationships among science, technology, society, and the individual
 - Benchmark: Knows ways in which technology has influenced the course of history (e.g., revolutions in agriculture, manufacturing, sanitation, medicine, warfare, transportation, information processing, communication)

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 one's 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-19th 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 home heat come from? Where would materials to build homes come from? 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 three columns, one describing different aspects noted below of Inuit life in grandfather's time, the second of Inuit life today, and the third of the students' lives. How are they similar and different? Aspects students might discuss are: the materials homes are built of, how they are constructed, how they are heated, transportation, obtaining food, recreational activities, climate and seasons, and clothing.
2. Discuss how geography affects people's lives. Ask students to list the ways that geography and climate have affected the Inuit people, 50 years ago, and today. What has changed, and what has remained the same in how geography and climate affect lives.

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 for a wooden house or fuel oil for heating homes, and to prepare class presentations on how that product might be imported over what routes and carriers, and from where. 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 three-generational Inuit family in arctic Canada today, is contrasted with life in the grandfather's time (extensively recorded in rare archival footage), which then had 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 some 50 years ago, his daughter, who is an outdoor guide for tourists, and her daughter, who attends school.

The Inuit have 28 words for snow, and one of them is for the best kind of snow from which to build igloos, the snowhouses of the grandfather's day.

Successfully hunting seals in the old days was a matter of life or death. Dogs sniffed out the seal's breathing holes, which were covered with snow, and the hunter might wait patiently

for hours to harpoon a surfacing seal. Summer hunting for seals sunning on the ice, was a matter of stealthy approach.

The care and feeding of the dog team, which drew the sleds, was quite important. So comfortable in the extreme cold, are they, that temperatures of -10 degrees Celsius, is too warm for them.

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 Climate and Food #9256
- Inuit Culture #9257
- 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

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.