



Exploring the Lifestyle of the Canadian Inuit

Concepts and Themes: A Research Guide

Prepared by the Docent Inuit Committee

October 2016

Exploring the Lifestyle of the Canadian Inuit: Concepts and Themes

1. Social



- 1.1 Identity
- 1.2 Community
- 1.3 Family
- 1.4 Livelihood
- 1.5 Education
- 1.6 Language

Historical: The Inuit's hunting and fishing culture was dependent on a close-knit community and strong family units for survival. Furs and stone or bone carvings were traded through the Hudson's Bay Company and services were provided to whalers. The seasons dictated a semi-nomadic lifestyle. The Canadian government created residential schools to educate youth. Language was largely not written until the 1950s.

Present Day: Government control and intervention has caused loss of traditional identity and community. The younger generation embraces modern technology, and often youth leave the North to find employment elsewhere. Language standards were created in 2009.

2. Cultural



- 2.1 Oral tradition
- 2.2 Art--
sculpture and
printmaking
- 2.3 Performance arts
- 2.4 Games

Historical: Cultural traditions were passed on orally by the elders. The skills involved in everyday living, from making clothing from skins and furs to carving stone and constructing sleds, kayaks, and umiaks (skin covered boats) were taught to the next generation. Long, dark winters found the Inuit carving simple forms from stone or bone, playing games, singing, and telling stories while waiting for the ice to melt and the weather to warm. When the season changed and the men would go off hunting and fishing, the women and children would send them off with drumming and singing.

Present Day: With the arrival of Canadian James Houston in the late 1940s, Inuit art and culture gained international acclaim, as Houston recognized the unique nature of the small Inuit carvings and arranged exhibitions to showcase them. He introduced printmaking to the Inuit and soon cooperatives were formed to produce and market the new art. Modern-day Inuit compete in throat-singing and drumming competitions throughout the world.

Exploring the Lifestyle of the Canadian Inuit: Concepts and Themes

3. Belief Systems



- 3.1 Animism
- 3.2 Shamanism
- 3.3 Spirituality
- 3.4 Christianity
- 3.5 Folklore

Historical: The belief in animism and the high regard for shamans pointed to the deep spiritualism of the Inuit and their reliance on the spirit world for survival. Successful hunting and fishing outcomes were assured through communication with the spirits, which were known through folklore passed down from generation to generation. The legend of Sedna is an important element in Inuit culture.

Present Day: Conflict arose when missionaries came to the Canadian Arctic and converted the Inuit to Christianity. The legends survive, however, and continue to inform the belief systems of the Inuit, even as they practice their Christian faith.

4. Technological



- 4.1 Communication
- 4.2 Transportation
- 4.3 Tourism

Historical: Inuksuit, stone markers, found throughout the tundra, acted as messengers to travelers, signaling good hunting spots and providing many other important messages. Dog sled teams brought the first Inuit people to Arctic Canada. Those who lived by the coast used kayaks for fishing and transportation. Their ancestors had crossed the Bering Strait and settled in coastal Alaska before trekking eastward.

Present Day: Internet communications now connect remote Inuit communities to the rest of the world. School children learn and study in much the same way as their sub-Arctic counterparts. Sledges (sleighs) have given way to Arctic Cats (snowmobiles and ATVs) for travel and recreation.

Cruise ships now bring tourists to the Canadian Arctic ports in the summer months, as the Northwest Passage becomes a reality. Regularly scheduled flights from major Canadian cities connect Nunavut to the rest of Canada and the world. There are still no roads or train service to Nunavut Territory.

Exploring the Lifestyle of the Canadian Inuit: Concepts and Themes

5. Environmental



- 5.1 Wildlife
- 5.2 Survival
- 5.3 Climate
- 5.4 Ecosystem

Historical: The Inuit of Arctic Canada have one of the last hunting and fishing cultures in the world. Until recently, survival depended on the hunt: Food, clothing, and shelter were provided by the land and sea. The harsh climate and physical environment above the Arctic Circle was unrelenting and unforgiving.

Present Day: The delicate ecosystem in the Canadian Arctic is being challenged by the threat of climate change and Arctic oil, gas, and mineral exploration. Although many Canadian Inuit are no longer solely dependent on hunting and fishing for sustenance, their world is changing as the polar cap continues to melt, adversely affecting marine life and the balance of nature. Exploration poses threats to wildlife and lifestyle.

6. Geopolitical



- 6.1 Characteristics
- 6.2 Geography
- 6.3 Population
- 6.4 Urbanization
- 6.5 Health and welfare

Historical: Fundamental characteristics of Arctic Canada only began to change with the advent of the Cold War when the region was valued mainly for its strategic utility vis-à-vis North American defense.


Present Day: The Canadian Inuit live in four regions, collectively known as Inuit Nunangat. The regions are: Nunavut Territory, Inuvialuit (in northern Northwest Territories and northern Yukon Territory), Nunavik (in northern Quebec), and Nunatsiavut (in northern Newfoundland and Labrador). Climate change presents the most serious challenge to the geopolitical status of the Canadian Arctic, as travel through the Northwest Passage becomes a reality.

7. Terminology




- 7.1 First words: An evolving terminology
- 7.2 Canada Post: stamps database
- 7.3 Hudson's Bay Company timeline

Terminology related to the study of Inuit lifestyle is found [here](#). Explore the Canada Post stamp collection and read about the Hudson's Bay Company and its relevance to Inuit life.


Concept	Theme	Web resource
1. Social 	1.1 Identity	1.1.1 http://www.houston-north-gallery.ns.ca/education 1.1.2 http://www.nfb.ca/film/qallunaat why white people are funny/ 1.1.3 http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/aboriginal-heritage/inuit/Pages/peter-pitseolak.aspx 1.1.4 http://firstpeoplesofcanada.com/fp_groups/fp_inuit1.html 1.1.5 http://www.inuulitsivik.ca/northern-life-and-inuit-culture/who-are-the-inuits 1.1.6 http://www.cbc.ca/news/business/washington-redskins-fight-could-put-pressure-on-edmonton-eskimos-1.2680161 1.1.7 http://naturalhistory.si.edu/arctic/html/resources_faq.html
	1.2 Community	1.2.1 http://data4.collectionscanada.ca/netacgi/nph-brs?s1=0795&l=20&d=POST&p=1&u=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.collectionscanada.ca%2Farchivianet%2F020117%2F020117030214_e.html&r=1&f=G&SECT3=POST
	1.3 Family	1.3.1 http://data4.collectionscanada.gc.ca/netacgi/nph-brs?s1=(inuit.ANYP.)+Or+(inuit.ANYI.+And+null.B742.)&l=20&d=STMP&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02011702_e.html&r=14&f=G&Sect1=STMP
	1.4 Livelihood	1.4.1 http://www.imagesnorth.com/History/history.htm 1.4.2 http://speakingmytruth.ca/v2a/?page_id=745 1.4.3 http://speakingmytruth.ca/v2a/?page_id=818 1.4.4 http://data4.collectionscanada.gc.ca/netacgi/nph-brs?s1=(inuit.ANYP.)+Or+(inuit.ANYI.+And+null.B742.)&l=20&d=STMP&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02011702_e.html&r=3&f=G&Sect1=STMP 1.4.5 http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/inuit-co-operatives/
	1.5 Education	1.5.1 https://www.itk.ca/what-we-do/ 1.5.2 http://www.admissions.ualberta.ca/en/aboriginal.aspx 1.5.2 http://speakingmytruth.ca/v2a/?page_id=827 1.5.3 https://www.itk.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Amaujaq-National-Centre-for-Inuit-Education-Milestone-Report-2012-2014.pdf
	1.6 Language	1.6.1 http://www.langcom.nu.ca/node/40 1.6.2 http://icor.ottawainuitchildrens.com/node/15 1.6.3 http://icor.ottawainuitchildrens.com/node/64

Exploring the Lifestyle of the Canadian Inuit: A Research Guide


Concept	Theme	Web resource
2. Cultural 	2.1 Oral tradition: Storytelling	2.1.1 http://www.inuitartzone.com/pages/oral-traditions-and-myths
	2.2 Art: sculpture and printmaking	2.2.1 http://www.baffininuitart.com/ 2.2.2 http://www.eskimoart.com/faq.html 2.2.3 http://www.hbcheritage.ca/hbcheritage/collections/art/inuitart/default 2.2.4 http://www.hbcheritage.ca/hbcheritage/history/people/others/james_houston.asp 2.2.5 http://www.dennosmuseum.org/collections/inuit/index.html 2.2.6 https://www.ualberta.ca/news-and-events/newsarticles/2013/november/inuit-art-exhibit-shows-off-collection-acquired-over-five-decades 2.2.7 http://www.gallery.ca/en/about/942.php 2.2.8 http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/inuit-printmaking/ 2.2.9 http://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/art-and-architecture/the-remarkable-life-of-inuit-artist-anniepootoogook/article32198919/
	2.3 Performance arts	2.3.1 http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/stories/020020-119.01-e.php?&item_id_nbr=47&page_sequence_nbr=1 2.3.2 http://ottawacitizen.com/entertainment/local-arts/unearthing-cultural-treasures-nunavut-society-seeks-to-protect-the-old-and-nurture-the-new?_lsa=0671-603b 2.3.3 http://www.inuitartsociety.org/inuit-art-news-resources 2.3.4 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KNb2ZDjeiU4 2.3.5 http://www.susanaglukark.com/ 2.3.6 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RcrQjHygy5o 2.3.7 http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/aboriginal-music-song/028012-1200-e.html 2.3.8 http://www.arcticinspirationprize.ca/index.php
	2.4 Games	2.4.1 http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/inuit-vocal-games-emc/ 2.4.2 http://icor.ottawainuitchildrens.com/node/21 2.4.3 http://icor.ottawainuitchildrens.com/node/27 2.4.4 http://icor.ottawainuitchildrens.com/node/39 2.4.5 http://icor.ottawainuitchildrens.com/node/31 2.4.6 http://icor.ottawainuitchildrens.com/node/25

Exploring the Lifestyle of the Canadian Inuit: A Research Guide


Concept	Theme	Web resource
3. Belief Systems 	3.1 Animism	3.1.1 http://data4.collectionscanada.gc.ca/netacgi/nph-brs?s1=(inuit.ANYP.)+Or+(inuit.ANYI.+And+null.B742.)&l=20&d=STMP&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02011702_e.html&r=15&f=G&Sect1=STMP
	3.2 Shamanism	3.2.1 http://www.historymuseum.ca/cmce/exhibitions/archeo/paleoesq/pes01eng.shtml 3.2.2 http://www.inuitartzone.com/collections/mythological-and-transformation 3.2.3 http://postalhistorycorner.blogspot.com/2014/04/millennium-5-powers-of-inuit-shaman.html
	3.3 Spirituality	3.3.1 https://inuit.com/collections/living-arctic?page=2
	3.4 Christianity	3.4.1 http://www.mqup.ca/inuit-shamanism-and-christianity-products-9780773535909.php 3.4.2. https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/on-faith/arctic-christians-get-first-complete-inuit-bible/2012/05/02/gIQA38nHxT_story.html
	3.5 Folklore: Sedna and other legends	3.5.1 http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/the-goddess-of-the-sea-the-story-of-sedna/ 3.5.2 http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/inuit-myth-and-legend/

Concept	Theme	Web resource
4. Technological 	4.1 Communication	4.1.1 http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/inuksuk-inukshuk/ 4.1.2 http://www.inukshukgallery.com/inukshuk.html 4.1.3 http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/archives/back-issues/pages/work.html
	4.2 Transportation	4.2.1 http://data4.collectionscanada.gc.ca/netacgi/nph-brs?s1=(inuit.ANYP.)+Or+(inuit.ANYI.+And+null.B742.)&l=20&d=STMP&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02011702_e.html&r=6&f=G&Sect1=STMP 4.2.2 http://data4.collectionscanada.gc.ca/netacgi/nph-brs?s1=(inuit.ANYP.)+Or+(inuit.ANYI.+And+null.B742.)&l=20&d=STMP&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02011702_e.html&r=7&f=G&Sect1=STMP 4.2.3 http://data4.collectionscanada.gc.ca/netacgi/nph-brs?s1=(inuit.ANYP.)+Or+(inuit.ANYI.+And+null.B742.)&l=0&d=STMP&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02011702_e.html&r=50&f=G&Sect1=STMP
	4.3 Tourism	4.3.1 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NMKYz_1bqLU 4.3.2 http://map.nunavuttourism.com/en.html 4.3.3 http://nunavuttourism.com/things-to-see-do/cruises 4.3.4 http://nunavuttourism.com/planning-your-trip/how-to-get-here

Exploring the Lifestyle of the Canadian Inuit: A Research Guide

Concept	Theme	Web resource
5. Environmental 	5.1 Wildlife	5.1.1 http://naturalhistory.si.edu/arctic/html/wildlife.html 5.1.2 http://www.seashepherd.fr/news-and-media/editorial-070821-1.html 5.1.3 http://phys.org/news/2015-03-mercury-pollution-danger-arctic-ivory.html
	5.2 Survival	5.2.1 http://naturalhistory.si.edu/arctic/features/croads/ekven10.html 5.2.2 http://www.historymuseum.ca/cmce/exhibitions/archo/paleoesq/pef01eng.shtml 5.2.3 http://icor.ottawainuitchildrens.com/node/28
	5.3 Climate	5.3.1 http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/sheila-watt-cloutier-touts-inuit-right-to-be-cold-in-new-book-1.2998375 5.3.2 http://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/sheila-watt-cloutier-on-the-right-to-be-cold-we-gave-up-our-wisdom-and-control-to-a-power-that-we-feared/article22151894/ 5.3.3 http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/report-impact-climate-change-arctic-coastline-1.3540707 5.3.4 http://nunavuttourism.com/about-nunavut/weather-climate
	5.4 Ecosystem	5.4.1 http://www.canadiangeographic.ca/article/labrador-project-combines-local-knowledge-new-technology-make-ice-travel-safer 5.4.2 https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100036000/1100100036004 5.4.3 https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100037307/1100100037311 5.4.4 http://www.cbc.ca/news/thenational/this-igloo-greenhouse-could-revolutionize-food-production-in-the-north-1.3698224

Exploring the Lifestyle of the Canadian Inuit: A Research Guide

Concept	Theme	Web resource
6. Geopolitical 	6.1 Characteristics	6.1.1 http://www.loppar.gc.ca/content/lop/researchpublications/prb0806-e.htm 6.1.2 http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/Map/irs/mp/index-en.html 6.1.3 http://www.inuitcircumpolar.com/ 6.1.4 http://www.state.gov/e/oes/ocns/opa/arc/ac/ 6.1.5 http://www.arctic-council.org/index.php/en/ 6.1.6 http://www.arctic-council.org/index.php/en/about-us/member-states/canada 6.1.7 http://www.canadiangeographic.ca/article/reverse-colonialism-how-inuit-conquered-vikings?ID=434
	6.2 Geography	6.2.1 http://www.thearctic.is/articles/overviews/homeland/enska/index.htm 6.2.2 http://geology.com/articles/northwest-passage.shtml 6.2.3 http://www.davidrumsey.com/luna/servlet/detail/RUMSEY~8~1~231928~5509077 6.2.4 https://jsis.washington.edu/canada/file/archive/taskforce09/images/canadatreeleone.jpg 6.2.5 https://www.fieldmuseum.org/node/18671 6.2.6 http://naturalhistory.si.edu/arctic/features/gateways/history.html
	6.3 Population	6.3.1 https://www.itk.ca/about-canadian-inuit/ 6.3.2 https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100014187/1100100014191#sc1 6.3.3 http://nunavuttourism.com/about-nunavut/people-of-nunavut
	6.4 Urbanization	6.4.1 https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100014187/1100100014191#sc1 6.4.2 https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1352471770723/1352471861365
	6.5 Health and welfare	6.5.1 https://www.itk.ca/what-we-do/ 6.5.2 http://www.admissions.ualberta.ca/en/aboriginal.aspx

Concept	Theme	Web resource
7. Terminology 	7.1 First Words: An Evolving Terminology Relating to Aboriginal Peoples in Canada	7.1.1 https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100014642/1100100014643 7.1.2 https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100014187/1100100014191 7.1.3 https://www.itk.ca/about-canadian-inuit/ 7.1.4 http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/aboriginal-heritage/inuit/Pages/introduction.aspx 7.1.5 http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/inuit-vocal-games-emc/ 7.1.6 http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/aboriginal-people-arctic/
	7.2 Canada Post: stamps, database	7.2.1 http://data4.collectionscanada.gc.ca/netacgi/nph-brs?s1=(inuit.ANYP.)%20Or%20(inuit.ANYI.%20And%20null.B742.)&l=0&d=STMP&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02011702_e.html&r=0&f=S&Sect1=STMP
	7.3 Hudson's Bay Company timeline	7.3.1 http://hbcheritage.ca/content/timeline