

1. Description

- 1.1 Name of society, language, and language family: Inupiat, Eskimo-Aleut, Inupiaq
- 1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com): esi
- 1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): Northwest Alaska.
- 1.4 Brief history: The first Hunter Gatherer groups were thought to have come across the Bering strait somewhere around 12,000 years ago. With the major climactic changes of the late Wisconsin glaciation and early postglacial times, Beringia was flooded and the mammal population either moved east and south, or dwindled and died out. The first Americans were thought to have followed the animals across the strait. Through extensive studies in archeology, physical anthropology, and linguistics suggest that the ancestors of present day Alaska natives can be traced to two migrations occurring 10,000 to 5,000 years ago. One of the migratory groups thought to have arrived around 6,000-7,000 years ago became better known as the Inupiat.
- 1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors: ** First contacted by the “strange men with beards” in 1000 A.D. The Norse travelled to the North Atlantic and the first European immigrants regularly traded iron implements for locally made products of seal and ivory. After the Norse died out, it took another 5 centuries before European contact would arrive.
- 1.6 Ecology: The Inupiat people lived in the desolate and cold landscape of Northwest Alaska and relied on large marine mammals as well as other terrestrial mammals to survive. Rarely did they get the opportunity to collect fruit and vegetables.
- 1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density: 6,420. Village size severely depended on weather or not their particular area was rich in resources. Home range size was anywhere from 12-50 plus living in a tight community of houses.

2. Economy

- 2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): wild herbs and roots, as well as berries.
- 2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: whale meat, caribou, moose, walrus, seal, fish, fowl, mountain sheep, bear, hares, squirrels, and foxes.
- 2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?: A sophisticated package of toggle-headed harpoons, lances, lines, and seal bladder floats was used for the bowhead whale hunt. Seal skin floats are used for whale hunts, as are water-filled seal bladders which attract and lead bowhead whales closer to the shore. Other tools include scratching boards for attracting seals to breathing holes, bows, arrows, spears, spear throwers, bolas for taking birds, snares. Fishing gear includes nets, traps made from branches and roots, hooks.

Upon whale drives, Staggered harpoon darts were used first; lances were used only after beluga prey had been driven in to the shallows and were becoming increasingly exposed to the retreating tide.

- 2.4 Food storage: Yes. Food was kept in Ice lockers dug in to the ice and snow. Also dried out meat was extremely important to sustain the families through the winter months. Matak, the blubber and skin of whales, provided many families sustenance though the winter months.
- 2.5 Sexual division of production: Women gathered berries, were often responsible for the butchering of whale meat with the man's supervision, were responsible for preparing the hides to be stretched over a boat frame, and tended to the kids. The males were the main hunters of whale, seal, and caribou. They also made many of the tools including the chert tipped darts and lances.
- 2.6 Land tenure: Nobody officially owned the land but if one was to wander to other settlements, beatings and death could ensue.
- 2.7 Ceramics: Originally no, although prevalent trade with Europeans as well as Russians as early as 1776 provided some Inupiat groups with copper kettles.
- 2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns: In larger families, the food obtained from hunting, fishing, and gathering was turned over to the umialiks (Male leader in the family) and his wife. She in particular kept track of what was available, what was needed and what could be redistributed to others. The larger the family the larger the distribution process, and the more extensive power for the umialik and his primary wife (nuliaqpak).
- 2.9 Food taboos: n/a
- 2.10 Canoes/watercraft? Inupiat natives traveled by *qayaq* (kayak) a closed skin boat typically for one person As well as the *umiaq*, a large open skin boat, 15 - 25 feet long used for hunting whale and walrus, travel and bartering. A large umiaq/angyaq could carry up to 15 people and a ton of cargo.

3. Anthropometry

- 3.1 Mean adult height (m and f): n/a
- 3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f): n/a

4. Life History, mating, marriage

- 4.1 Age at menarche (f): n/a
- 4.2 Age at first birth (m and f): n/a
- 4.3 Completed family size (m and f): n/a
- 4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f): n/a
- 4.5 Age first marriage (m and f): n/a
- 4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce: While divorce was, and is practiced in both traditional and modern Inuit societies, its incidence is not as high as in mainstream American society.

- 4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously: Not sure of the percentage but male polygyny rarely occurred, mostly with “rich” umiaks that had achieved wealth and power. Also, sometimes by means of a trading partnership, an Inupiat could extend the process of cooperation to non-kin, thereby ensuring additional assistance in the form of protection, food, goods, and other services. Co-marriage was a nonresidential agreement between two conjugal husband-wife couples united by shared sexual access. Often the transfer of marital partners usually would last for a week or several weeks and the males would exchange homes by night and return to their actual residence by day.
- 4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?: n/a
- 4.9 Inheritance patterns: Larger family power was not necessarily inherited as the fortunes of other smaller families could rise and oust those of larger families. Also flaked stone bifaces, such as lance heads, were conserved and retouched to be inherited along male lines.
- 4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict: n/a
- 4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals: n/a
- 4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy): All Inupiat groups were endogamous and exogamous, with strict rules against incest.
- 4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these “other fathers” recognized?n/a
- 4.14 What is the belief of the mother’s role in procreation exactly? (e.g., “receptacle in which fetus grows”)n/a
- 4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)?n/a
- 4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape: n/a
- 4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin). n/a
- 4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms? n/a
- 4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring/a
- 4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?n/a
- 4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) femalesn/a
- 4.22 Evidence for couvadesn/a
- 4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older)n/a
- 4.24 Kin avoidance and respect? Older kin were greatly respected as they normally held more power and knowledge.
- 4.24 Joking relationships? Yes especially among times of ceremony.
- 4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations. Patrilineal for goods and names came from the names of those who had died.
- 4.26 Incest avoidance rules. Yes, there were strict rules against it.
- 4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?n/a
- 4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?n/a
- 4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?) Marriage was always within the community.
- 4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)? Marriages were sometimes arranged by the umialik.
- 4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who: n/a

Warfare/homicide

- 4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:n/a
- 4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death: Open warfare between members of differing localities was a normal occurrence.
- 4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing: Many times, in-group violence had to do with jealousy of richer families.
- 4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations): Strangers upon site were often asked who they were knew within the community and if the answer was “nobody” the stranger could be beaten to death. Also a known outgroup like truce was understood from the period of late spring through late fall when darkness set in. During these productive months interterritorial trading occurred prevalently. But once the darkness set in hostilities commenced.
- 4.18 Cannibalism?n/a

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

- 5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size: Anywhere from a dozen to fifty people traveled in a hunting group.
- 5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality): Some Inupiat groups were more sedentary while others were more mobile. Most all groups however tended to move towards the coast during the summer to partake in the Beluga whale drives and go in towards the mainland during the winter.
- 5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes): Politically, these families were roughly equal in status, with no external chief, council or any other recognized form of government.
- 5.4 Post marital residence: After the marriage women joined the men in their large family group.
- 5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense): There were no defined boundaries but settlements were exclusive of anyone who didn’t belong.
- 5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex): Women and younger natives were part of the lower end of the hierarchical division.
- 5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships: In times of ceremony, all members of the settlement joked with one another.
- 5.8 Village and house organization: Within the village there existed many families. Each family included everyone within the immediate family as well as others such as cousins and non-immediate members. The system I get the sense was very fluid with some members coming and going at times.

- 5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses): An important family meeting place uniting family members was the *qargi*. Sometimes an overturned boat placed downwind on the beach could serve as a qargi but often the building was a structure of some permanence. Prior to the arrival of Christian Europeans even Inupiat settlement had at least one of these ceremonial houses. Children joined the house of their father, and on marriage the wife transferred to that of her spouse. During the day, it was a common meeting place for boys and men, while girls and women commonly spent their working hours in family houses. In the evening, the qargi became the family social center where members and friends regularly played games told stories, danced, and participated in various rituals. With the opening of the ceremonial season in the fall, men spent much of their time in there for work and recreation. The women brought them food and sometimes remained to join in games and dancing. Occasionally men and older boys slept in the qargi.
- 5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere? Houses at Ipiutak were small, about 12 by 15 feet square, with sod-covered walls and roof. Benches against the walls were used for sleeping, while the fire was kept in a small central depression of the main room.
- 5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc: The major social entities comprising these different districts or localities were networks of large, bilateral, extended families tending toward patrilocality, each composed of three to four generations and each containing numerous married siblings and often cousins. Because the family was often too large for a single house dwelling, adjacent houses were utilized. Ecologically less favorable districts, local families may include a dozen or so members, whereas a highly productive areas local family size may reach up to 50 or more. These large and especially productive areas were typically located along sea mammal migration routes.
- 5.12 Trade: The first white explorers to reach Arctic Alaska were the Englishmen Sir John Franklin and Captain F. W. Beechey. Both noted the extensive trade carried on between Inuit and Indian groups. Other early explorers, including Alexander Kasharov, noted this intricate trading system as well, in which goods were moved from Siberia to Barrow and back again through a network of regularly held trade fairs. All of this changed, however, with the arrival of European whalers by the mid-nineteenth century. Formerly hunters of Pacific sperm whale, these whaling fleets came to Arctic regions following the bowhead whale migration to the Beaufort Sea for summer feeding. Unlike the Inuit, who used all parts of the whale for their subsistence, the whaling fleets from New England and California were interested primarily in *baleen*, the long and flexible strips of keratin that served as a filtering system for the bowhead whale. This material was used for the manufacture of both buttons and corset hooks, and fetched high prices.
- 5.13 Indications of social hierarchies? A well defined hierarchy did prevail based largely on relative age sex, and a sufficient number of younger siblings and cousins to make the elder statuses meaningful. The male family head was called a *umialik*, often translated as "boss" or "rich man" All *umialiks* and their wives were considered "bosses" but to be considered a "rich" *umialiks* required a large family composed of many active male and female hunters and skin sewers. These *umialiks* were powerful leaders, a trait shared only with the religious shaman (*angatquq*)

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6 Time allocation to RCR:n/a

- 6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine): Many of the traditional singers were also shamans and had the power to cast spells with their words.
- 6.2 Stimulants: Tobacco was traded with the Europeans but traditionally no stimulants were used.
- 6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal): Birth and pregnancy were traditionally surrounded by many taboos. For example, it was thought that if a pregnant woman walked out of a house backwards, she would have a breech delivery, or if a pregnant mother slept at irregular times during the day this would result in a lazy baby. Also, there were special birthing houses or *aanigutyaks*, where the woman went through labor in a kneeling (or squatting) position. These postures have been recognized by Western culture as often preferable to the hospital bed. Parents who admired particular persons would in turn take the Eskimo name of that person and give it to their child. Also, Grandparents who knew their forebears were consulted for additional Eskimo names. In other instances a couple would give the child a name of a recently deceased person or a name common within the family.
- 6.4 Other rituals: Behavior during beluga drives was very particular. In order to have a long life and success in hunting, hunters hung worthy objects like glass beads or wolverine fur on sticks pushed in to the cave walls. An offering of a small dried child's body or fetus assured a kayaker success in hunting belugas. The dried corpse was wrapped in a hide bundle that the owner carried in his kayak while on the hunt. A dried carcass of a bald eagle was to bring protection and overall success in the hunt. Just as important as things to do to prepare for the hunt there were also activities to be avoided at certain times. Skins of inland animals like caribou should not be sewn while on the coast during the summer months. Children should not sleep while belugas are being butchered. During beluga hunting, everyone avoided cutting or destroying grasses and flowering plants with the exception of wild rhubarb and celery. At the close of the Beluga season, beluga bones were heaped and burned as well as the kayakers clothes, ragged cut off shorts and armless pullover shirts.
- 6.5 Myths (Creation): Much of this religious tradition was directed and passed on by shamans, both male and female. These shamans could call upon a *tuunsaq*, or helping spirit, in times of trouble or crisis. This spirit often took the shape of a land animal, into whose shape the shaman would change him or herself. Traditional Native religious practices, as well as the power of the shamans, decreased with the Inuit's increased contact with Europeans.
- 6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games): An oral culture, Inuit danced at traditional feast times in ritual dance houses called *karigi*. These dances were accompanied by drums and the recitation of verse stories. Some of these dances represented the caribou hunt; others might portray a flight of birds or a battle with the weather. Both poetry and dance were important to the Inuit; storytelling was vital for peoples who spent the long winter months indoors and in darkness.

6.7 Sex differences in RCR: Everyone was involved in song and dance although some dance numbers were gender specific. The men style of dance involved much more full body motion whereas the women performed a lot with their hands and torsos while sitting.

6.8 Missionary effect:

6.9 RCR revival:n/a

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs: Believed in reincarnation and the recycling of spirit forms from one life to the next, both human and animal. Names of those who died recently are given to newborns.

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people? n/a

6.12 Is there teknonymy? no

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.) A central tenet of Inupiat religion was that the forces of nature were essentially malevolent. Inhabiting a ruthless climatological zone, the Inupiat believed that the spirits of the weather and of the animals must be placated to avoid harm. As a result, there was strict observance of various taboos as well as dances and ceremonies in honor of such spirits. These spirit entities found in nature included game animals in particular. Inupiat hunters would, for example, always open the skull of a freshly killed animal to release its spirit.

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint: no

7.2 Piercings: no

7.3 Haircut:

7.4 Scarification: no

7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.):no

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment: no

7.7 Sex differences in adornment: no

7.8 Missionary effect: The missionaries who came over quickly learned to dress more like that of the Inupiat because of the sever cold conditions.

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment: n/a

8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system:n/a

8.2 Sororate, levirate:n/a

8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.):n/a

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

Numbered references

1. <http://www.everyculture.com/multi/Ha-La/Inuit.html>
2. <http://www.akhistorycourse.org/articles/article.php?artID=196>
3. http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=esi
4. Books: Hunters and Gatherers in Theory and Archeology
5. Traditional Beluga Drives of the Inupiat of Kotzebue Sound, Alaska
6. The Inupiat and Arctic Alaska