

1. Description

1.1 Name of society, language, and language family: Yupik ,Yupik, Aleut

1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com): YSR

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): (63 W,171N)

1.4 Brief history: The Yupik Inuits were found by the Cossack explorer Dezhnev, whose expedition was unknown to the Russians for almost 100 years after it happened. The Yupik had traded with outside people because they had metal tools, as well as glass beads and other outside goods. The first well-recorded meeting of the Yupik and outsiders was with Commodore Billings, an American employed by the Russians. The Yupik happily traded pelts for tobacco and other outside products like knives and other manufactured goods. Beginning around 1940, the American government began to attempt to settle the Yupik living on St. Lawrence Island, with mixed results. (1)

1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors: After the purchase of Alaska from the Russians, the Americans took interest in settling the Yupiks, specifically the inhabitants of St. Lawrence Island. The example of the village of Gambell, and the government created small-main street type village. The village was doomed to fail because it was based on aid given from the government, and the Yupiks relied on trade, which is rather rare, considering that you know, they are in-between Alaska and Siberia.

1.6 Ecology: St. Lawrence Island is considering subarctic, and the flora is mostly lichen, algae and tundra grasses. There are some shrubs and the slightest amount of trees to still be considered present in the ecology. As for land mammals, there are many small vole like creatures, including lemmings, mice and foxes. Occasionally, wolves, polar bears and reindeer occasionally wander onto the island over frozen ice. There are many incredibly important sea mammals that fueled the Yupik lifestyle. There were several types of seals and whales that were hunted, and used for oil, clothing, food and anything else.

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density: The Yupik communities were never properly studied before they became partially settled. The village had about 300 or so people, but tradition says that clans were around 20-25 or so. (1)

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): Noonivak was the prime carbohydrate that did not come from mammals, and it was dried leaves of a shrub that were saved for the winter. (1)

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: Seals and whales were crucial because they were giant and every single item of the whales and seals were used. The intestines were used as waterproof clothing, and the blubber was used for cooking and heating. Birds were also eaten very often, because they were convenient and ever present. (1)

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?: Hunting usually was done with harpoons and rifles, once those became available

2.4 Food storage: Food storage is kept in the semi-permanent homes, and was rarely transported. Food was preserved by either drying mostly. The most common vegetable item was noonivak or dried shrub leaves. The means of preserving all meat was by being placed on a drying rack, and made into jerky. (1)

2.5 Sexual division of production: Women would do the small amount of foraging to be done, but their main responsibility was in the home, such as making clothing, keeping fires lit, and maintaining the home. Women had control of everything in the home. In more modern times of trading, a man would only leave the groceries/traded items in the home and the woman would deal with the rest. Men are primarily hunters, because meat is so important to the diet. Men are also expected to do the trading. (1)

2.6 Land tenure:

2.7 Ceramics:

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns: Sharing was done communally by family group, or ramka. There was no mention of who exactly cut up the food or distributed it. (1)

2.9 Food taboos:

2.10 Canoes/watercraft? The Yupik had walrus leather ships that fit seven men in each, with possible inflatable rafts, basically. (1)

3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f): Men: 165.2 cm, Female: 153.4 cm (4)

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f): Men: 71.6 kg and 64.2 kg for women (4)

4. Life History, mating, marriage

4.1 Age at menarche (f): 15

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f): Yupik women usually begin bearing children around 18-20 range. (1)

4.3 Completed family size (m and f): The average family had 2-3 children, often with the younger children being raised by the elderly members of the community. (1)

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f): Something close to 3 years, but never officially recorded before the Yupik were settled. (1)

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f): First marriage usually occurred around age 18, and there was usually only 1 marriage

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce: There was no recorded divorce, but since wife sharing was common, there is a possibility that any divorce was associated with this. (1) That being said, it is my own theory, so there is no real evidence.

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously: Shared wives play into this topic as well, but technically speaking there was no polygyny (1)

4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?:

4.9 Inheritance patterns: Inheritance would usually be split between male siblings, once the mother and father had passed. If a mother was to remarry into a different tribe, her possessions would remain with the original tribe. (1)

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:

- 4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals: I could not find any information about homosexuality, but there was widespread knowledge of gender changing among all Northern indigenous populations, from Greenland to Siberia. The inter-gender people were considered great shamans. (2)
- 4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy): Exogamy was very present, because incest was looked frowned upon, but not entirely absent. Women were “bought” from other tribes. (1)
- 4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these “other fathers” recognized?
- 4.14 What is the belief of the mother’s role in procreation exactly? (e.g., “receptacle in which fetus grows”)
- 4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)?
- 4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape
- 4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin): A spouse could not be from within one’s own ramka, or patriclan, so most marriages were to nonrelatives.
- 4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms? There was an interesting wife-sharing aspect of Yupik culture, but there was no real sexual promiscuity reported. The nature of the wife-swapping will be explained later. (1)
- 4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring
- 4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children? The raising of children was usually collective to a certain extent, so the responsibility was spread among the tribe. There is also the idea of group adoption, where children are adopted by other members of the tribe, usually the elderly so they aren’t lonely during foraging and hunting endeavors. (1,4)
- 4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females:
- 4.22 Evidence for couvades: There I no evidence of couvades in Yupik
- 4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older)
- 4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?
- 4.24 Joking relationships? There was a relationship between males, usually with cousins, called Iloweaka. An ilioweaka was a bosom-buddy-type relationship which was solidified from birth. The children would be best friends their entire life, and encouraged to embarrass each other and compete with each other. The joking relationship was kept between the two boys, the same joking was not allowed with anyone except the iloweakas. (1)
- 4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations: Descent was patrilineal, and it was based on the ramka, like just about everything else. (1)
- 4.26 Incest avoidance rules
- 4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?
- 4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name? A person acquires their name by the finding of a soul for that person. The soul is considered immortal, and the amounts of souls are finite (not to say that they aren’t attributed several times). The souls wander, looking for a newborn to call home. The spirit is usually an elder from either within the tribe or from a neighboring group. (1)
- 4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?) Marriage is almost always outside of the clans, because the clan is usually related males. The women are essentially sold off to other clans. (1)
- 4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)?
- 4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:

Warfare/homicide

- 4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:
- 4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death:
- 4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing:
- 4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations): Outside relations were common, given some of the historical documents, which showed an eagerness to trade for refined metals and tobacco. Since the primary source used focuses on the settling of the Yupik, it assumes that trade is a normal and natural thing.
- 4.18 Cannibalism?

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

- 5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size: During different seasons, the village sized varied. In the summer, the village that would become Gambell had around 350 inhabitants. Once the winter set in, the Yupik went their separate ways onto the ice, usually in groups no more than around 20, before they settled. (1)
- 5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality): During the summer months, the Yupik would be on the Siberian coasts, and all the way on St. Lawrence Island. Once the ice sheets started to form, the Yupik would venture out onto the ice sheets to hunt the seals and whales driven off shore. (1)
- 5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes): Elders hold a revered position. Gender didn’t matter, but the oldest member of a clan was the leader. It was very rare for women to be the oldest woman though, for some reason, men tend to be around slightly longer. (1)
- 5.4 Post marital residence: The woman lives with the husbands’ family. Women are considered property, so the woman is basically sold from her father’s clan to her husbands’ clan. (1)
- 5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):
- 5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex): The divisions of interactions were based on generation. Respect your elders is the golden rule, with a special emphasis on the family relations between wife and mother-in-law and husband and father-in-law.

- 5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships: There are lifelong iloweaka, which were explained earlier, which is basically a predestined best friend. There was also wife-sharing between these friends. Children from these unions would be assumed to be the “legitimate” father’s children. (1)
- 5.8 Village and house organization:
- 5.9 Specialized village structures (mens’ houses): There was a gasegiq, or men’s house, which was a communal lounge, basically. Women would cook their men’s food and bring it to the gasegiq. (4)
- 5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?
- 5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc: The most important aspect of the patriclan is the ramka, or direct family group. The patriclans spanned several generations, and included many different family groups. The ramka was the immediate family group usually consisting of 2-3 generations, and it was led by the eldest member of the ramka. The ramka is a commune which allocated necessary funds to whoever needed them within the ramka. In this case, funds means any type of currency, be it pelts, engines (post settlement) or food. The dominant ramka would help the entire community, but preference would go to the members of the ramka. (1)
- 5.12 Trade: Trade was constant with mainland Siberian Eskimos, who traded with deeper interior Russians. For a land almost purely icy and cold, the Yupik needed to trade for metal hunting instruments. (1)
- 5.13 Indications of social hierarchies? There is a very complicated patriclan system, where each clan is called a ramka. The ramka is based around a complex inheritance system, which used so much of the Yupik language I got lost, but basically, the ramka is a small socialistic commune, and its main function is to divvy up food. (1)

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6 Time allocation to RCR:

- 6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine): Each small community had a shaman. An interesting aspect of the shaman was the transgendered shaman. Any transgendered person was a shaman, but not all shaman were transgendered. (1,2) The only natural medicine mentioned was the cuyaq leaf, which was a bitter tasting leave used or relieving pain and it was boiled in water and used to ease sore feet and hands. (4)
- 6.2 Stimulants:
- 6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal): There is an elaborate death ritual and a very long mourning period. There are two reasons death is revered. The immortal soul leaves the dead body, but also if mourning is done improperly, the deceased could return to haunt the family as a shade. The beginning in the ceremony is the breaking of the deceased possessions, and the body is left naked on a mountainside or rock outcropping. There is no explanation as to why this happens spiritually, but on a practical level, the body is quickly eaten by scavenging animals. For days after the funeral, the family of the deceased wears their clothing inside out as a sign of their mourning. As a birth ritual for girls, baby girls were held and stroked by an elderly woman, sort of molding the girl to become an attractive woman. (1)
- 6.4 Other rituals:
- 6.5 Myths (Creation): I could not find a creation myth, but there is a fascinating story about how whales became wolves, when they could not find any food in the ocean. They immediately began searching for reindeer to eat. (4)
- 6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):
- 6.7 Sex differences in RCR:
- 6.8 Missionary effect:
- 6.9 RCR revival:
- 6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:
- 6.11 Taboo of naming dead people? Names are associated with immortal souls, which create a very odd communal web, because names never stop existing, when a person dies, his name is transferred to a newborn in some different body. (1)
- 6.12 Is there teknonymy? There is no teknonymy really, because names are inherited from immortal souls, so each name corresponds to a higher being. (1)
- 6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.): The main god is called _____, and he is the creator of the world. Apart from that there is an aspect of animism involved in the passing on of spirits and names through those immortal spirits/souls. The currently unoccupied souls travel the Artic people looking for a newborn to be born, and once they find one, the soul rests there. The Yupik recognize the child with the soul of their relative or friend as the same person in a different form, creating a complex form of family and friendship between clans because a man’s father’s soul may be in the body of a child from a different tribe. (1)

7. Adornment

- 7.1 Body paint:
- 7.2 Piercings:
- 7.3 Haircut:
- 7.4 Scarification:
- 7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.): Colored glass beads are worn by both genders, but since resources and trading are relatively scarce, there is very little constant adornment. There is a spiritual single bead on a string to keep sickness away from the owner of the bead. (1)
- 7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment: Headdresses are worn by women, and the headdresses are made of reindeer hair, with beads fastened to a leather strap. The single bead on a string is given to the pallbearers after funerals. (1)
- 7.7 Sex differences in adornment:

7.8 Missionary effect: The missionary effect was not very strong in Arctic until the attempted settlement of the Yupik people. The Yupik of St. Lawrence have a certain extent accepted aspects of Christianity, but still hold to most of their folklore. (1,4)

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:

8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system:

8.2 Sororate, levirate:

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

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

Numbered references

1. Hughes, Jane N. *An Eskimo Village in the Modern World*. Ithica, New York: Cornell University Press, 1960. Print.
2. Frink, Lisa, Rita S. Shepard, and Gregory Reinhardt. *Many Faces of Gender*. Denver: University of Colorado, Print.
3. Risca, P.M., C. Schraer, S.O.E. Ebbesson, et al. "Overweight and obesity among Alaskan Eskimos of the Bering Straits region: the Alaska Siberia Project."
4. Dolores, Kawagley. *Yupik Stories*.