

Traveling Inuit Art Exhibition from the Dennon Museum Center
Teacher's Guide & Art Education Program
Lesson Two: Grades 5-9



Introduction

The Exhibition *Contemporary Inuit Art from the Dennon Museum Center* presents the traditional culture of the Inuit people, including selections related to survival, Arctic wildlife, nomadic life and the spirit world. Through many different media the viewer gains insight into these four aspects of traditional Inuit culture. Objects included in the exhibit serve as narratives for keeping alive the old ways of their culture.

WHO ARE THE INUIT?

Nunavut is a land of wild rivers, icy seas and open tundra located in the Arctic Circle. It is a huge territory, encompassing more than one-fifth of Canada's land mass, and is almost completely populated by Inuit – meaning “the people,” in the Inuktitut language – who make up 85% of the estimated 29,000 inhabitants. Canadian Inuit are also found in the Western Arctic, Nunavik (formerly Northern Quebec), and Labrador, but the most influential centers for art making – Cape Dorset and Baker Lake – are in Nunavut.

The Inuit have occupied these lands for thousands of years. Their ancestors are believed to be Asian hunters who crossed the land bridge between Siberia and Alaska in search of mammoths, although anthropologists have never agreed upon the exact time of their arrival. In one of the most challenging environments on earth, the early Inuit lived a nomadic existence in a never-ending search for food.

This hunting culture experienced profound changes once contact was made with the *quallunaat* (white people). In the 17th and 18th century, English, Scottish, and American whalers made the first ventures into Arctic waters. Trappers from the South soon followed, cementing the idea of a trading economy and quasi-permanent encampments. By 1850, Christian missionaries arrived to introduce a foreign system of spiritual beliefs and written language, and to establish hospitals, nursing stations and schools.

The *quallunaat* also brought guns, which made hunting easier, and soon animal numbers decreased. No longer able to sustain themselves with hunting, the Inuit moved closer to the settlements and became increasingly dependent upon the white trappers and clergy for food. With no natural immunities against imported diseases, flu and other viral strains killed thousands of Inuit. In the 20th century, modern technologies exposed the native peoples to the strong forces of the outside world, and the old ways of living were on the brink of vanishing.

Enduring Idea of the Exhibit Lesson

The growing need to communicate and teach traditional Inuit life and the history of a community rich in culture is important as the ethics, codes and rituals of this nomadic, tribal society are challenged by modern technology and society. Their art reflects the Inuit's desire to document their history and preserve a treasured heritage.

Objectives

- Students will recognize that art can represent a culture and a time.
- Students will identify how the preservation of traditional sculpture and prints can promote the study of different cultures and its people.
- Students will demonstrate an understanding of the Inuit culture in studying and looking at their artwork. In doing so, students will see and explain how art objects reflect times, places and cultures in which they were created (art history).
- Students will make informed interpretations about what they are seeing and why certain tools, activities and characters are depicted. These interpretations allow students to see value in these works of art and will be supported with persuasive reasoning (art criticism and aesthetics).
- Students will express their own ideas through original artworks and written stories (art production).
- Students will understand how works of art can reflect the environment, values and beliefs of a traditional community of people.
- Students will recognize how role, gender and hierarchy can be inferred from objects.
- Students will explore the relationship between the physical environment and art.

Vocabulary

Arctic- area near the North Pole.

Eskimo- an American Indian term meaning "eaters of raw meat." The Inuit are sometimes called Eskimo.



Glacier- A huge mass of ice that moves slowly overland. Ice caps and valley glaciers are the two main types of glaciers. Ice caps are very thick, slow-moving glaciers that cover large areas of a continent. Valley glaciers begin on mountains, flow downhill, and often follow paths originally formed by rivers. Ice caps and glaciers cover about 150,000 square km of Nunavut.

Vocabulary Continued...

Igloo- domed house made of hard packed snow. Inuit's lived in these houses during the winter.

Inuit- are people who live in the Arctic, the icy lands surrounding the North Pole. They prefer to be called Inuit rather than Eskimo. Inuit is also a word from the Inuit's own language meaning "the people."

Inuktitut- language of the present day Inuit, came into existence in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries when missionaries traveled to the frozen north. The language reflects cultural bonds and a strong value system inherent in Inuit life.

Kamiks- inner boots made of soft animal skin that Inuit wore in the winter.

Kayak- a narrow canoe-like boat that holds 1 or 2 people.

Nomad- one who moves from place to place.

Parka- a hooded jacket.



Serpentine- a medium-soft stone harder than the commonly known soapstone, is the medium most used by Inuit carvers. Colors range from flat, dull grey to precious gem green, blue green, black and white. Serpentine stone can be found throughout the Arctic, but often carvers must travel great distances to quarry stone of good quality.

Shaman- the most powerful person in the community. The Shaman could communicate with the spirits and acted as intercessor between the physical realm and the spiritual realm. His or her responsibilities were to cure the sick and counteract evil forces, as well as communicate with the spirits who controlled a hunt's success or failure.

Stencil Prints- Stencil prints, particularly sealskin stencil prints, produce a lyrical quality not found in stone cut prints. Different levels of color intensity are created by gently applying small amounts of ink through the cut surfaces of the skin with stippling brushes. Stenciling is most conducive to creating large areas of flat subtle colors.

Stone Cut Prints- a method of printing using a stone block on which artists carve their relief images. It began in Cape Dorset in 1959, it is an adaptation of the woodcut technique, but here the stone provides the printing surface.

Tupiks- Inuit tent made of caribou or sealskin. Inuit used these tents during the summer.

Umiak- a large boat, with sail, that held 10-12 people.

Activities

History

The Inuit nomadic way of life prevailed until approximately 1950 when the Canadian government took responsibility for the health, education and welfare of these people and encouraged them to relocate to permanent settlements where food, clothing and shelter would be provided. Once relocation was achieved, the difficult task before the Canadian government was acculturation--a allowing for the continuation of cultural evolution while adapting to a life of western world values. For the Inuit, survival within the framework of changing world view was not an easy undertaking, and perhaps, more challenging that understanding the rhythms of the land, was adapting to an imposed social structure.

Maintaining cultural identity and managing their affairs while at the same time attempting to become a viable economic entity, has proven most challenging. A culture in transition, these people now find themselves creating a new life touched by technology in a modern world. It is because of this that their art reflects a desire to express what they know best and document it in order to preserve the *old ways*.

“Whenever we had visitors we always told stories or talked about the old ways. Nowadays we don’t even have visitors to come and listen to our stories. I was taught to tell stories when I was a child. Always tell three stories only. If you tell only one story it will fall apart.” *Lily Klengenberg, Inuit woman*

“I knew a lot of stories, but because I haven’t told stories in a long time I am forgetting them. I spend too much time watching TV now.” *Jimmy Hikok, Inuit man*

History Activity

The transition from nomadic life to settled life is an ongoing process for the inhabitants of Inuit Arctic communities.

Compare the present day situation of the Inuit to their past way of life. What changes in day-to-day activities do you see the Inuit encountering when making the transition from their traditional life to contemporary life? Think about transportation changes, education alterations, changes to gender roles...etc.



Language

Before the last century, Inuit did not have a written language. The Inuit had the ability to read the land, sky, water and sea for information. All of Inuit history, practical knowledge, values and beliefs were passed on from generation to generation by word of mouth. The information was contained in both songs and stories, repeated to children by their parents and grandparents as they grew. This is now referred to as “oral tradition”: the wealth of information held by elders about the past. Oral tradition also refers to the way in which this information is passed along: the skill of remembering and telling stories, sharing and singing songs. For example, the story and legend of “Sedna”, the Inuit Goddess of the Sea, has been passed on to many generations through oral tradition.



THE STORY OF SEDNA

Sedna was a beautiful girl, who lived alone with her father. Many men wanted to marry her, but she loved only one- a strong hunter who sang with a haunting voice- he promised her comfort and much food. She chooses to go with him and after they married she found out that he was a spirit- the spirit of fulmar, the seabird. He swept Sedna away to a distant land, where seabirds surrounded her. The birds scolded and cried, pecked and fluttered. Sedna was frightened and lonely. She sang for her father to come and take her away.

A year went by before her father came. Sedna’s father rowed them out onto the water to flee. The sky turned black. The birds went after them and huge waves erupted in the sea, threatening their death. Afraid for his life, Sedna’s father pushed his daughter into the sea to hopefully calm fulmar the seabird. But Sedna clung to the side of the boat with her fingers. Her father chopped off her fingers.

Sedna soon sank below the waves and was gone. As Sedna’s fingers fell into the sea they turned into seals, whales, walruses, polar bears and fish, her nails became whalebone. As the young woman sank into the sea she was transformed into the mystical being known as Sedna, “Mother of Oceans” and ruler over all life in the Sea <http://www.lisahuntart.com/pana.html>. The blessings of Sedna are still sought by the people of the North who know it is She who sustains them.

The Inuit know that if a sea animal lets the hunter catch it, Sedna must be thanked, and if the Inuit are hungry from the failure in the hunt, Sedna is showing her displeasure.

Language Activity

1. Write a poem or a legend:

Read “The Story of Sedna” to the class or have the students read the story themselves as an example. Then have them write their own legends using their creative writing skills and imagination. Remind them about the Inuit culture and how important telling stories is to their community.

Every picture or sculpture tells a story- to help the students brainstorm, have them think about their favorite object in the exhibit –or favorite Arctic animal if you have not visited the museum yet—and then write a poem or legend about that particular piece of art work!

2. Draw your idea of Sedna:

After reading or listening to “The Story of Sedna,” draw what you think Sedna looks like. Think about her clothing, what she would have with her...?

Geography

CREATION OF NUNAVUT

On April 1, 1999, the territory of Nunavut (pronounced NOO-na-voot) was carved out of the eastern section of Canada’s Northwest Territories, establishing an official homeland for the region’s Inuit population who had inhabited the Arctic region for millennia. Nunavut, meaning “our land” in the Inuit language of *Inuktitut*, was the result of decades of diligent planning and patient negotiations between Inuit leaders and the Canadian government. Nunavut was the largest aboriginal land claims settlement in Canadian history and a landmark development for Inuit throughout the Arctic and its birth represents the first time Canada’s boundaries have been redrawn since Newfoundland joined the Confederation in 1949.

Geography Activities

-Discuss the location of where the Inuit lived and where Inuit artists’ drew their inspiration from. Ask the students to imagine what kinds of homes nomadic people who lived in this area might have.

-Have the student’s think of why working together in the community would make life easier.

-Discuss why the Inuit people chose sculpture as an art form. Have them think about why the sculpture would be small.



Geography Activities Continued:

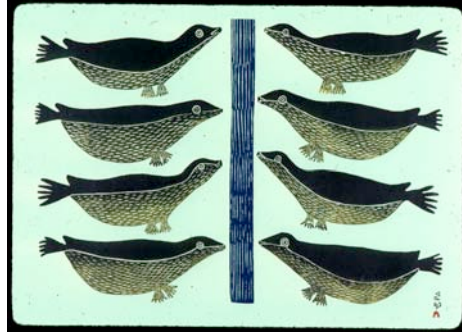
Using Map Skills:

1. Using a map of the Western Hemisphere, have the students locate the Arctic area around Hudson Bay and explain the Nunavut to them. In doing so you may teach them about the different bodies of water that surrounds this area as well.
2. Using the map provided, color the region where Inuit **used to** inhabit and also color the region the Inuit **now** live.
3. See if you can locate Iqaluit- the capital of Nunavut on the map.
4. Baffin Island is the largest island in Canada and the fifth largest island in the world— see if you can locate Baffin Island on the map provided.



QUICK GEOGRAPHY FACTS ABOUT NUNAVUT

- Although it covers four time zones, Nunavut uses Central time.
- In winter, the lakes and the ground are so frozen that they can be used as temporary roads.
- The purple saxifrage is the official flower of Nunavut.
- The ptarmigan is Nunavut's official bird.
- The territory's motto is "Nunavut Sanginivut," which means "Nunavut, our strength."



SCIENCE

Science Activities

1. Have students explore the rotation and tilt of the Earth to understand climate and light variations in the Arctic.
2. Discuss Global Warming as it relates to the Arctic and Inuit:

Global Warming Effecting Artic

Earth has warmed by about 1° F over the past 100 years. Why? And how? Scientists are not exactly sure. The Earth could be getting warmer on its own, but many of the world's leading climate scientists think that things people do are helping to make the Earth warmer.

Science Vocabulary



Climate- Climate describes the total of all weather occurring over a period of years in a given place. This includes average weather conditions, regular weather sequences (like winter, spring, summer, and fall), and special weather events (like tornadoes and floods). Climate tells us what it's usually like in the place where you live. San Diego is known as having a mild climate, New Orleans a humid climate, Buffalo a snowy climate, and Seattle a rainy climate. How would you describe the climate where you live?

Climate Change- Climate is the long-term average of a region's weather events lumped together. For example, it's possible that a winter day in Buffalo, New York, could be sunny and mild, but the average weather – the climate – tells us that Buffalo's winters will mainly be cold and include snow and rain. Climate change represents a change in these long-term weather patterns. They can become warmer or colder. Annual amounts of rainfall or snowfall can increase or decrease.

Global Warming- Global warming refers to an average increase in the Earth's temperature, which in turn causes changes in climate. A warmer Earth may lead to changes in rainfall patterns, a rise in sea level, and a wide range of impacts on plants, wildlife, and humans. When scientists talk about the issue of climate change, their concern is about global warming caused by human activities.

Latitude- is measured from the equator, with positive values going north and negative values going south.

Longitude - is measured from the Prime Meridian (which is the longitude that runs through Greenwich, England), with positive values going east and negative values going west.

Weather- Weather describes whatever is happening outdoors in a given place at a given time. Weather is what happens from minute to minute. The weather can change a lot within a very short time. For example, it may rain for an hour and then become sunny and clear. Weather is what we hear about on the television news every night. Weather includes daily changes in precipitation, barometric pressure, temperature, and wind conditions in a given location. What is your weather like today?

Science Articles Relating to the Arctic, the land of the Inuit:

Article #1

“Big Thaw Coming: Climate change may slam Arctic”

If the changes in climate predicted for this century come to pass, everyone will be affected, but the people and creatures of the Arctic will face some of the largest challenges.

Many Arctic locales are already feeling the heat. Between 1943 and 2002, average annual temperatures in coastal regions north of 50° N -- the latitude of Prague, Czech Republic, and Winnipeg, Manitoba -- increased by 0.4°C (0.8°F). Average temperatures in the inland regions of those high latitudes jumped an average of 0.8°C.

Research suggests that warming trends will be most pronounced in winter months, a pattern that could dramatically affect the extent, thickness, and persistence of sea ice in the Arctic Ocean. Higher temperatures would also impact the Arctic's highways, buildings and pipelines as they rest on the currently firm but increasingly threatened foundation of soil now frozen year-round.

Biological effects of the expected warming at high latitudes will probably be extensive, says Fred J. Wrona of the University of Victoria in British Columbia. For example, migration routes of species that live or pass through the region could be altered, and creatures could be exposed to diseases that now afflict their relatives in more-temperate climates.

Most species that inhabit arctic freshwater lakes have adapted to harsh conditions that now provide ecological barriers to other creatures, says Wrona. Warmer temperatures would result in fewer days of ice cover on some lakes, increasing their biological productivity and making conditions conducive to species traditionally found at more southerly latitudes.

Later this year, scientists will issue a comprehensive report that addresses the effect of the expected warming on phenomena such as river flow, species extinctions, human health, and land and water use among indigenous peoples.

The information in this article appears in the May 29, 2004 issue of *Science News* (vol. 165).

Article #2

Satellites Document Arctic Warming

Most of the Arctic warmed considerably in the 1990s compared with the 1980s, according to new research from NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center. Researcher Josefino Comiso used satellite measurements of Arctic surface temperatures collected between 1981 and 2001 for his analysis. Comparing the satellite data with longer-term surface measurements, Comiso found that the rate of warming during the last 20 years was eight times larger than that of the past 100 years.

The satellite data show that, per decade, the North American Arctic warmed by 1.06 °C (1.91 °F), Eurasia warmed by 0.5 °C (0.9 °F), and Greenland showed a slight cooling trend of 0.09 °C (0.16 °F).

Over sea ice, annual temperatures climbed by 0.33 °C (0.59 °F) per decade, while during the summer months temperatures rose by 1.22 °C (2.2 °F) per decade. Rising temperatures over sea ice lengthened the season of ice melting by 10-17 days per decade, and may help explain recent findings that sea ice cover in the Arctic is declining by 9 percent per decade, reaching record low levels in 2002. Scientists suggest that this reduction in sea ice cover could lead to even greater warming in the Arctic, as open water absorbs more incoming solar radiation, and hence heat, than does ice.

The research appears in the November 1, 2003 issue of the Journal of Climate (vol. 16, pp. 3498-3510). For more information, visit: <http://www.gsfc.nasa.gov/topstory/2003/1023esuiuce.html>.

Greenhouse Effect, Climate Change and Global Warming

The Greenhouse Effect: Scientists are sure about the greenhouse effect. They know that greenhouse gases make the Earth warmer by trapping energy in the atmosphere.

The greenhouse effect is important. Without the greenhouse effect, the Earth would not be warm enough for humans to live. But if the greenhouse effect becomes stronger, it could make the Earth warmer than usual. Even a little extra warming may cause problems for humans, plants, and animals.

The Global Warming Quiz

1. What is the most common greenhouse gas emitted from human activities?
 - a. Nitrous Oxide

- b. Carbon Dioxide
 - c. Methane
 - d. Oxygen
2. Greenhouse gases in the atmosphere are always bad for humans and the environment.
- True
 - False
3. In which of the following ways do people increase the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere?
- a. Cutting down trees
 - b. Driving gasoline-powered automobiles
 - c. Burning coal to create electricity
 - d. All of the above
4. Greenhouse gases cause global warming by:
- a. Absorbing and reradiating heat from infrared rays
 - b. Causing the atmosphere to catch fire
 - c. Absorbing the water in the atmosphere
 - d. Reflecting solar rays

Hints and Answers:

1. Hint: It is called CO₂, Answer: b 2. Hint: Greenhouse Gases allow the earth to be just the right temperature for life, Answer: False 3. Hint: humans do a number of things to increase greenhouse gases in the atmosphere including: deforestation and extracting and combusting fossil fuels, Answer: d 4. Hint: Some rays of heat from the earth escape to outer space, others are absorbed by greenhouse gases, Answer: a.

**This Quiz was adapted from: <http://www.epa.gov/globalwarming/kids/>

Politics & Government

Nunavut is a territory. A territory is different from a province. A province owns its own land and has powers that are set out in Confederation. A territory, on the other hand, is created through federal law, and the federal government owns the land. Also, the federal government can make decisions in a territory on matters such as education, whereas

provinces can make their own decisions and policies. A territory cannot vote on changes to the Canadian Constitution.

The Nunavut territorial government has an elected Legislative Assembly with nineteen members and a cabinet of ministers overseeing the activities of ten departments. Some departments, such as the Department of Culture, Language, Elders, and Youth, are concerned with maintaining Inuit traditions. The departments and agencies are spread around the 26 communities of Nunavut.

Government Activity

Have the students compare the treatment of the Inuit people by the Canadian government to the treatment of the Native Americans by the U.S. government. Ask the students to evaluate the use of sculpture and prints to preserve the memories of early Inuit life.

Things to Think About:

Art Aesthetics- Art Aesthetics include the study of art from all cultures and all times.

Art Criticism- thinking and talking about ideas in the classroom as a whole is very important. Challenge the students to elaborate on their ideas: “Please explain to me why you say that?” or “How did you arrive at that judgment?”

Breaking up the class into small groups also assists in having a fruitful discussion. Often times students feel more comfortable in smaller groups and are more likely to talk about their ideas and thoughts in a smaller setting. At the end of a discussion, bring about a conclusion to help students.

Art History- the study of objects that reflect the times, places and cultures in which they were created.

Art Production- is important for students to participate in hands on activities related to the particular area or period in which you are studying. Have the students express ideas through original artwork and written stories.

RESOURCES

Websites:

Official Nunavut Site

<http://www.nunavut.vom>

The Nunavut Handbook

<http://www.arctic-travel.com>

Government of Nunavut

<http://www.gov.nu.ca>

Books:

Beckett, Harry. *Nunavut*. Calgary: Weigl Educational Publishers Limited, 2001.

Hancock, Lyn. *Hello Canada: Nunavut*. Minneapolis: Learner Publishing Group, 1995.

Keen, Jared. *Iqaluit*. From the Canadian Cities series. Calgary: Weigl Educational Publishers Limited, 2000.

Soubliere, Marion. *The 1999 Nunavut Handbook*. Nunavut: Nortext, 1998.