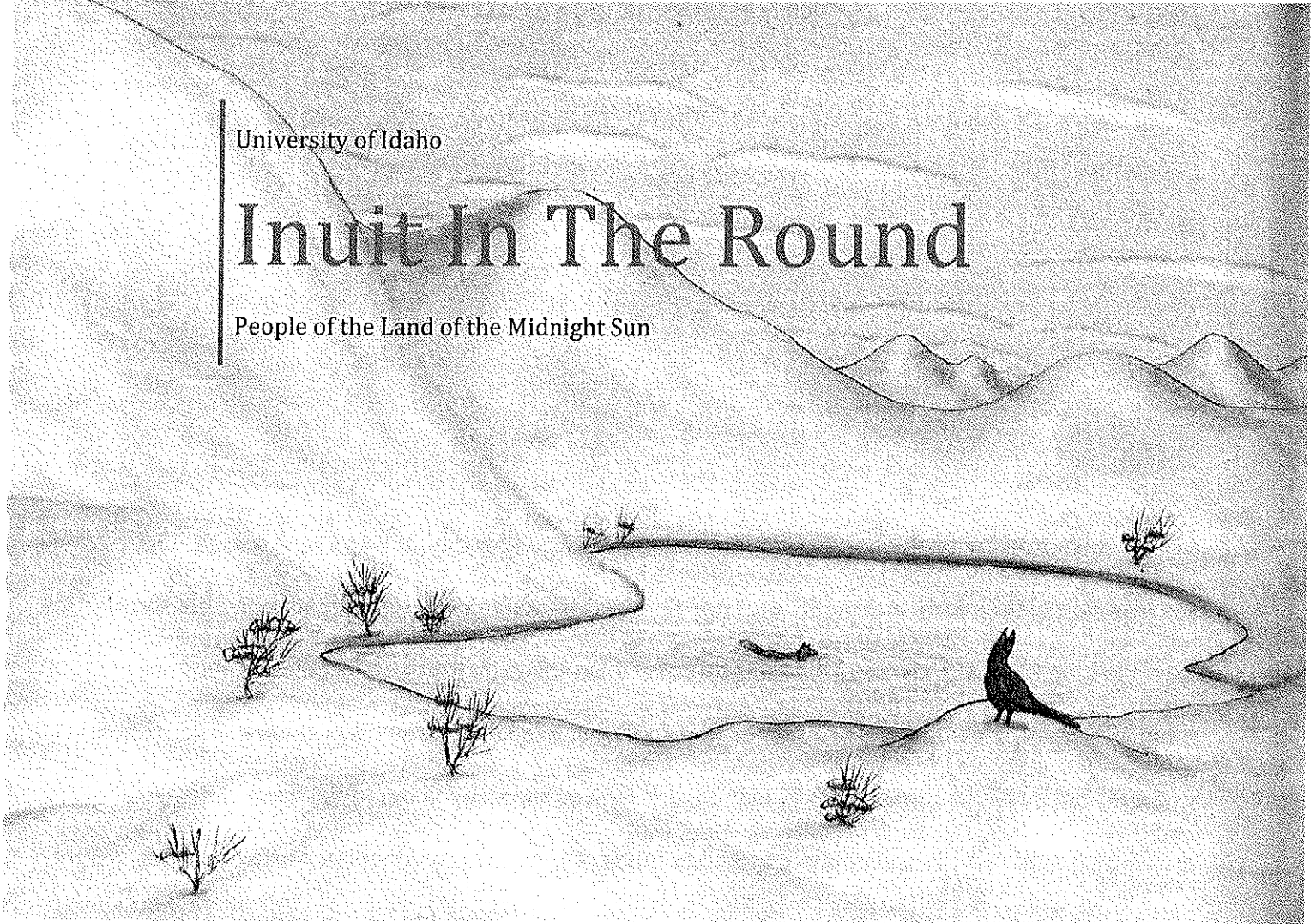


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# Inuit In The Round

People of the Land of the Midnight Sun



Joey Ramirez, Josh Peters, Wade Sutton & Ali Knox  
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**Spring**  
*Joey Ramirez*



A warm glow on the horizon symbolized more than a new day. It was a new season. The sun was slowly but surely making its way into the sky. Grandmother and grandfather, a little sore from the long night of blowing winds and cold arctic air, made their way out of the precious one room winter abode careful not to wake the grandchildren. Oh how that sun was shining. The warm rays of sunshine came across grandmother's face as she stepped out of the home, a revitalizing tingle slowly spreading through her limbs. The sun was no doubt powerful, and was welcomed after such a long absence. She spread out her arms, careful to take in as much of the warm glow as possible. Grandfather, peering out into the vast, white distance, gave no indication of what was to be in store. He simply grabbed grandmother's hand and watched the snow light up into a bright field of glowing powder. There was work to be done, and this was certainly

going through grandfather's mind for the sun not only meant a new day, it was a new season and nobody understood this more than he did.

It wasn't so long ago that grandfather was a young man, doing his best to provide for his family. It was just him and his wife, and their two beautiful daughters. A few seasons prior, his father died of an accidental drowning. It was a tragedy, for his father was a wise man. He taught him everything he knew about how to be a good hunter. The water was just too cold for this area, and it was not traditional for their people to learn to swim in the sea. That year was a hard one for young grandfather. Without the help of his father, it was a poor year for hunting. He did his best, but with the stores from the summer previous running out, and the lack of game caught, his family soon found themselves without food. They say she died from a broken heart, but grandfather knew his mother didn't pass away from such a cause. He blamed himself for her death. It was the lack of food and his poor hunting skills that was the problem he told himself. Maybe he had disrespected Sedna, he thought. Maybe she had stopped providing animals for his family as punishment. Whatever the case may be it was a hard year for his family losing both his mother and father within months of one another. Grandfather, now an old man, never forgot his mistakes. Every year he remembered the memory of his mother and father and the tragedy that had befallen his then small family.

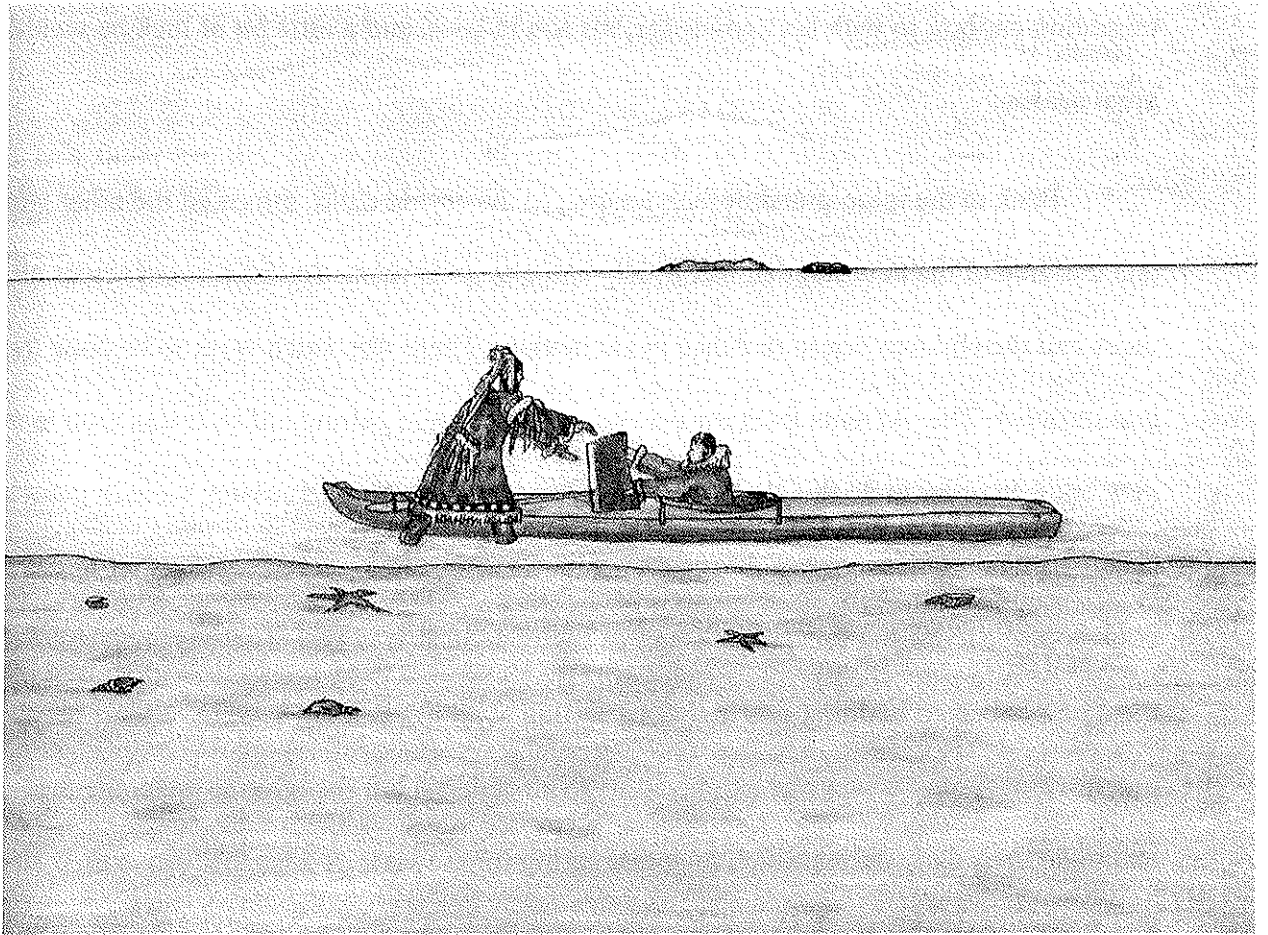
Today however was a new season. Grandfather stood looking at the horizon with grandmother, taking a few moments to honor the moment, and to remember the new season. It was this season that grandfather remembers most and it was this season that he would be prepared. He was always prepared. From inside their winter abode came the loud piercing wale of a child. Grandmother turned to grandfather and rolled her eyes as she unlocked her hand from his and walked towards the home. Careful not to track snow inside the house she cleaned of her

feet and stepped through the threshold, eventually walking onto the pine laden floor. The warm smoky smell of fire glided through the air as she went to the child that was making such a ruckus. There in the house was more than just a small child. It was her two beautiful daughters and their husbands, along with several grandchildren and their precious new arrival, of whom grandmother was now tending to. The household was slowly but surely making their presence known as they wiped the sleep from their eyes and rummaged through their various belongings to start the day. The two husbands left the igloo shortly after awakening to speak with grandfather as they often did most days. As they stepped out they too noticed the warm glow of the sun upon their faces. There was much work to be done and they knew it as soon as they felt the sun's rays.

Spring was upon the happy go lucky Inuit. As the sun began to creep across the sky and the air began to warm slow and steadily, the snow and ice on the igloo began to melt ever so slightly. It was time to move to their new homes. This was on the mind of grandfather, but most importantly was the idea of hunting. It was most important on grandfathers list because he did not want another incident like the one that took place so many years ago. His cached store of caribou was full from the previous season for he was always prepared. Grandfather was very meticulous about his hunting patterns, making sure to never take more than needed, and to always pay proper respect to the animals and of course Sedna, the provider of the animals. Throughout the winter the men hunted game animals. Now was the time that the caribou migrated north. The warm weather led to new hunting options; for the illusive ground squirrel would soon be coming out of their own winter homes, and the warm air meant softer snow and thinner ice. Good fishing weather was upon them and many long hours of jigging for fish and leaving nets would soon be underway. Grandfather also knew the traditional path of the

migrating caribou so with his knowledge, his son in laws, and a little bit of luck he would have a great season.

Back in the igloo grandmother, tending to the crying child, informed the other women and children of the new sun that had finally come to greet them. Smiles formed across all their faces and the children began to dance in excitement. There was much work to be done thought grandmother. The old tents from the previous seasons were getting old so it was time to make new ones. In order to do this they needed caribou skins which, this season, were in great supply because grandmother too was always prepared. Caribou skins were sewn together to form the outside of the tents, but this task was not as easily done as it is said. There is great ritual that must be performed in doing this including fasting at all times when sewing. This is because proper respect must always be a top priority. The children left the igloo to welcome the new sun and to do their daily duties which included caring for the various dogs that drove their sleds. Now that the weather was getting warmer, it was important for the sleds to also be covered to prevent unnecessary wear on them. One child however strayed from the necessary duties for this season he was older. It was time for him to finally stand alongside with his grandfather, his father, and his uncle. He walked over to where the three stood gazing at the sun. The boy's father saw his son approaching and gently placed his hand on his child's shoulder. This season he thought to himself, would be the season his son caught his first seal. He could feel it in his bones, for he had been teaching his son the hunting way for a long time.

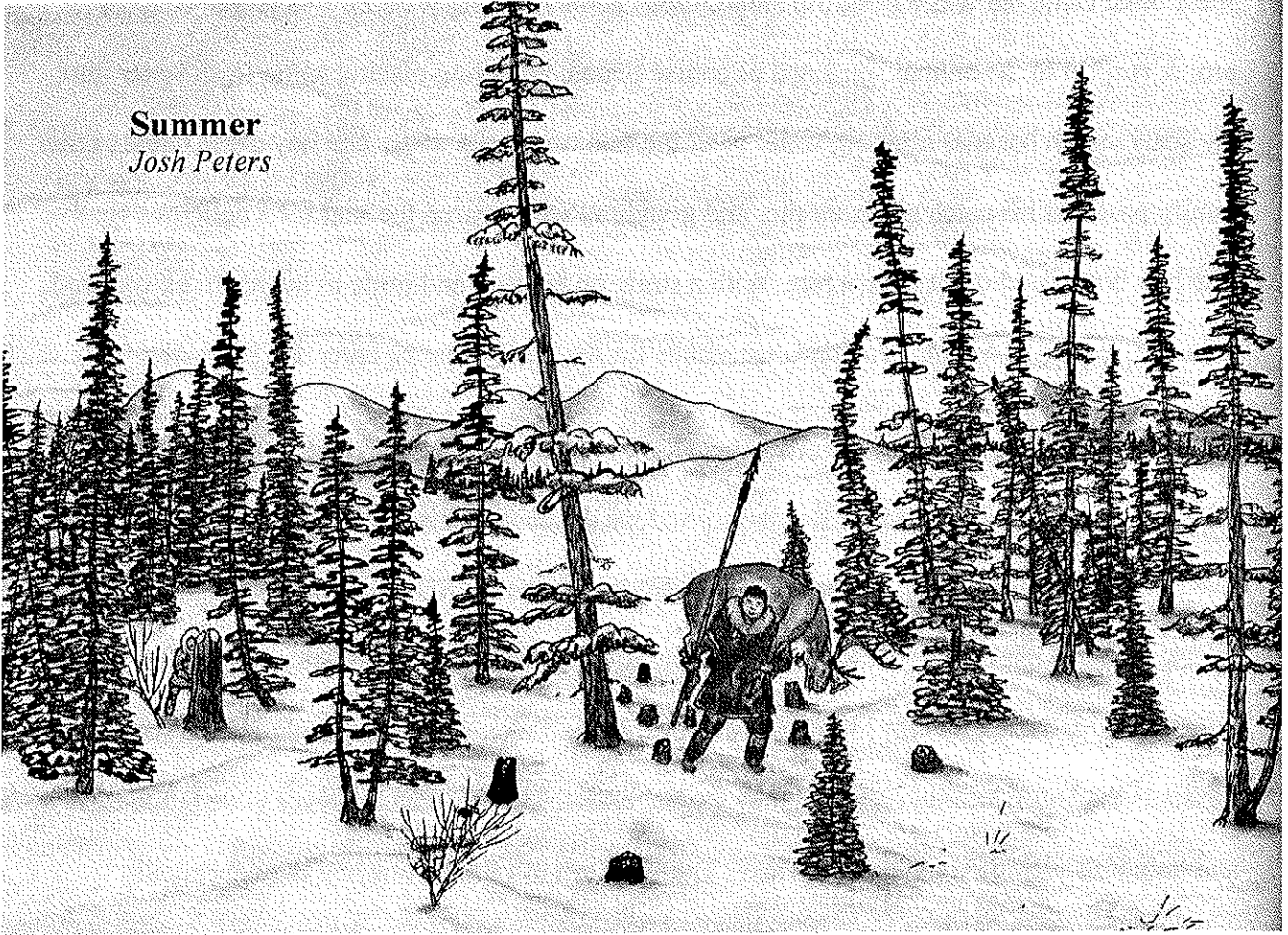


It is believed that when a seal comes up from a hole in the ice, it is simply looking for a drink of fresh water. It is this that the men remember as they set off towards the sea for a spring season hunt. The warming effect of the sun allows the ice to start thinning. It is because of this that the men are able to find adequate breathing holes, holes in the ice in which seals come up through the ice for a breath. Oh how they wait. Sometimes they wait for several hours or even days without a sign of seal. Eventually however, they young boy sees something. A small almost unnoticeable ripple in the water appears its surface and the boy knows it is now or never. Trembling, he grabs the spear in his hand careful to never break eye contact with the water. He thrusts his spear into the water with as much force as his small body can muster. It was a clean attempt that left him both jubilant and exhausted, for when he pulled and tugged up with his

spear what came out was a beautiful smooth seal. Remembering what he was taught he gave proper respect to the animal spirit and of course Sedna, including placing some fresh water into the seals mouth because after all, water is all the seal was really after. The boy came home to his family proud of his catch as his mother and grandmother prepared the seal for a delicious meal. The boy however did not have a bite. With a smile on his face and pride in his heart, he watched on as he, for the first time, provided sustenance for the family that he cared for so much.

Grandfather loves to fish mostly because his entire family participates in this activity. After his son's successful hunt a few days previous, he decides his family should go on a group fish hunt. The two mothers, making sure her children are well fed, give double portions of food for they are the ones who will work the hardest this day. The children after finishing their meals prepare the sled and dogs for journey to the lake. Grandfather and Grandmother decide to sit on the sleds the entire journey; after all they are the eldest. The children however were left to tug and help pull various supplies to the lake. The journey isn't a long one and they eventually stumble upon the large body of water covered with the thinning layer of ice. Laying out fur mats on the ice near open holes, the family waits with their spears poised. Some of the smaller children stand over their parents shoulder; waiting, watching, and learning. Many fish are caught and grandfather is satisfied. They quickly make the journey home. Grandmother and the other mothers prepare the fish for eating, and then the family enjoys a delicious meal afterward heading to bed to get some rest. The family will need all the rest they can get for soon they must move to their new location.

**Summer**  
*Josh Peters*



The days become longer, so long that the sun soon never truly sets, only just dipping beneath the horizon. The icepack has opened up to allow for travel on the sea, and the family packs their sea faring vessels with all their goods. Summer has come to the Arctic Circle, and the family is ready to move to the summer trading outpost. Loading the families' boats with the winter pelts thick coats, the children help their mothers pack, everyone doing their share.

Only after all their necessary tools and belongings are safely tucked away do the adults push off into the sea. The family paddle off across the sea to the Hudson Bay's Trading Post, controlled by the whites. There they will trade for things the Grandmother had never grown up eating; white powder and sand that can be fried in fat to make sweet balls, and another white sand that makes meat flavored. They also are in need for more shots for the families rifles for



which they will have to trade many of the thick winter pelts. At the outpost many Inuit families congregate especially in more recent seasons. Grandfather tells the grandchildren stories as they travel; stories of his own childhood before the coming of the fur traders with their red and blonde beards, when the trade was between just the Inuits and other brown people of the arctic. He tells stories of Sedna, and of how her father and dog prowl around her home in the sea. The old man shares stories about the bird people and their ways. How the tern people travel with the seasons as they fly overhead above the convoy of the family. The children listen closely so as not to miss a word in their grandfather's stories. They travel many hours, and pass by many islands along the way with baby seals waiting for their mothers to return from fishing. The grandfather tells of how Sedna gave seals to the world, and how the seal people are excellent providers of fish to their children, and give themselves to the Inuit for sustenance. The family must make camp on an island for a rest while traveling, and pull their boats onto the shore to make wind breaks while the sun slowly travels along the western edge of the world back to the east where it rises again.

The family sets out again, and as they come closer to the trading post they can see other Inuit families also making the summer travel to the trading post on the large island. When they do arrive, the settlement is abuzz with hundreds of people, all seeking to trade for the new goods. Pulling into the inlet the settlement surrounds, the family makes for an area they have used in summers past. They are greeted by the mother's cousins, who help to pull their small flotilla onto the shore. The family members greet each other with gifts and stories of the past year. After making their camp, the men take their supplies into the settlement for trading. The whites are difficult to work with, but eventually the men return in the evening with shot and other goods wanted by the family. They tell the grandparents that the men at the trading post were looking for the tusks of walrus, which are in high demand farther south. The family is pleased to hear this

because this is the season for walrus hunting, and their youngest son is due to go on his first hunt for the large mammal. The men share stories of the walrus people, and how they have come to know them through years of hunting. The grandfather tells of how the walrus tusks were used to make many fine tools, but now they can be traded for different items made from smooth stone that makes knives, needles, and carving tools. The young boy goes to bed without sleeping much, he is excited for the hunt to come. He knows they will not leave for several days, but he dreams that he becomes a great hunter, honoring Sedna and the walrus people for their gifts.

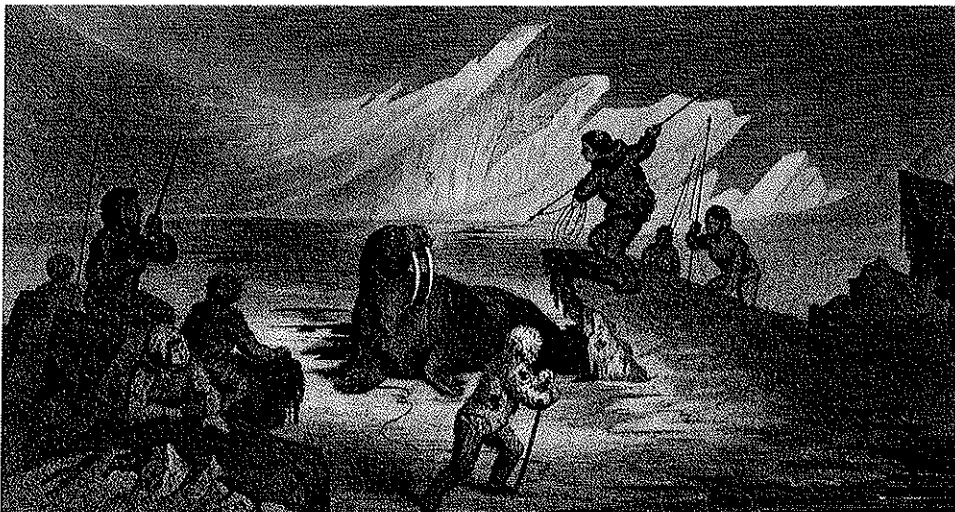
When the time comes for the men to leave they load their kayaks, leaving the larger boats behind. The smaller kayaks are made of skins with light wood frames, making them ideal for travelling quickly and easy to maneuver while hunting so that they can be lifted by even one strong man. As they travel, the men sing songs of their great feats from past seasons while the



youngest boy prays for his own song if he is able to receive a fine walrus. The men paddle away

from the big island of the Hudson Bay Company north towards the smaller islands scattered throughout the sea. They make for an island home to walrus spotted by one of the cousins who had passed on his group's trip to the settlement. A small rocky bay protects the walrus and their kits from the rougher sea and so the hunters paddle farther past it to make land on the leeward side of the bay. They leave the kayaks behind and the boy's father hands him a harpoon for the hunt. A boy's first kill is something special, and to use a rifle would not be right, the father explains. The men tell him to not be afraid, for Sedna will show him which beast is right, and his family will be there to help as soon as the walrus is speared. Some of the hunters run ahead to be on the other side of the walrus, while the rest approach from the kayaks. They approach slowly as the animals doze on the rocks, warmed by the sun high in the sky, casting no shadows over the arctic. The boy sees that the walrus do not know they are approaching, and his heart is filled with joy that he is really doing it. He can barely see his cousins and uncles on the other side of the walrus. They are already in their hunting position, motionlessly watching.

The boy knows that he will have to act quickly once the walrus is stuck; he had been



raised hearing the tales of young men who were trampled by raging bulls due to sloth. The boy sees one small bull with large tusks

closest to the other group of men, and he knows it is Sedna's gift to him. He approaches the animal from a large rock outcropping, and quickly stabs the beast as it rises, startled by the

sudden movement. Immediately the other walrus dive into the sea while the boy's family acts to bring the bull down, but the great beast has chosen to die and soon the men are laughing and cheering as they work to portion the large animal into travel size.

When the men return to the settlement, they are greeted by the family. Everyone is glad to have a new hunter return home. The tusks are removed to be traded with the whites, and the women get to work cleaning the walrus. For this rare occasion the men build a fire to cook some of the meat for the feast to be held in honor of the new man in the family. Much of the extended family and friends who are in the summer encampment arrive later that evening, while the family of the young hunter shares the walrus meat and fish that the family had. The boy does not partake in any eating, because as his grandfather says, it is his role now to provide for the family in the way they had provided for him.

The arctic summer continues and the days continue to become warmer. The men hunt walrus, heading out regularly to hunt walrus with their rifles for the meat and blubber to be

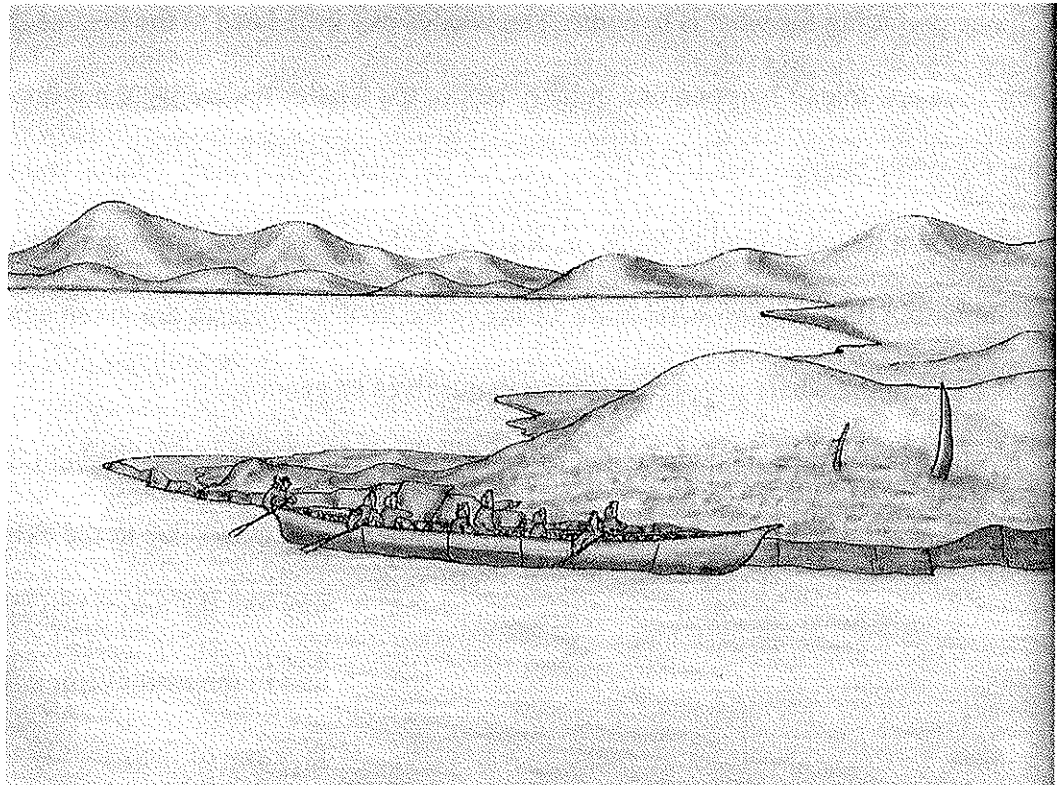


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traded for more goods with the whites. One father chooses to trade some walrus even for white clothes, but he finds them to be inferior to the animal skins given to him from Sedna. The summer days are long though and the white clothes are new and exciting, though his wife's father

warns him that it is foolish to waste Sedna's gifts. As time goes by word spreads that beluga whales had been seen by one family of Inuit from a southern island who came into the settlement. While other groups were not excited by the news, choosing instead to continue hunting the walrus for trading, the grandmother and grandfather were adamant that the family needed the whale meat for when they would prepare to leave the settlement as fall approached.

By this time of the season, the sun's trips around the horizon have dipped lower and lower and the family realizes the elders are right. Trading may be good, but the family will need meat for when the ice returns. Knowing this the men from the families prepare to leave in the morning to head south where the whales had been spotted. Whaling can be a dangerous endeavor, so the young men will not be joining the more experienced hunters on this trip. They will be leaving in the morning, and so the men prepare their harpoons and rifles. Unlike the larger whales that float when they die, the beluga does not, and can be quite feisty for their smaller size. The Inuit of the settlement sleep uneasily that night, as a cold wind blows from the north through the inlet, some families without more serious dwellings do not sleep at all.



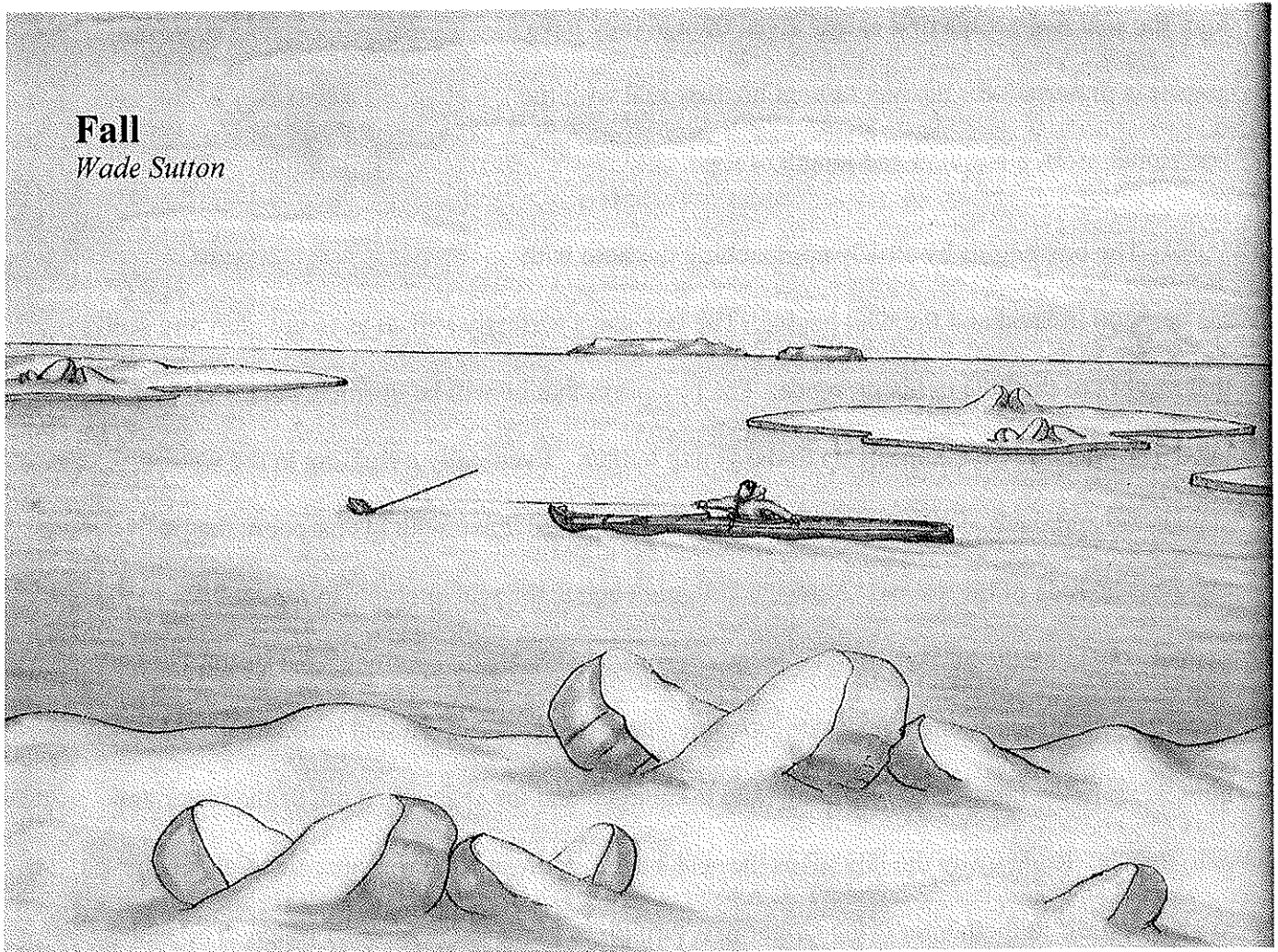
Just as the sun dances on the southeastern horizon, the men push off into the water from one of the families' large traveling boats. They are far from the large island when the sun is high overhead. They had heard that it was almost a full day's travel to where the whales had been seen. After that and then some the men made camp on a small island, eating some cold fish they had brought with them. The next morning they head out early to explore some the shoals around a cluster of islands. Praying to Sedna so that she might be generous enough to share with them they keep their eyes open for the unmistakable white whales. Towards midday a large pod is spotted not far off from the end of an island. The whales have congregated in the shallow water where it is warmer and the schools of fish are active. The men swiftly paddle towards the whales, each one preparing for what is to come. The whales pay little heed to the boat as they feed, and so the men are able to harpoon one quickly before the whales realize what has happened, going limp, the white creature has been slain. Excited the men spear several whales and quickly coordinate on which animal to focus on, a young but large cow. The men quickly converge on her and within minutes two whales are strung to the boat and praises are given amongst the hunters and to the whale people for giving themselves so generously.

It is late but the men agree it is best to return home to their wives and children, rather than staying another night away. The paddle in shifts, taking breaks due to the extra baggage in

tow and the return trip takes all night and to the next evening. The exciting greeting of their family though is well worth the work the men have done. The women set to work cleaning the whales while the men eagerly tell of their hunt.

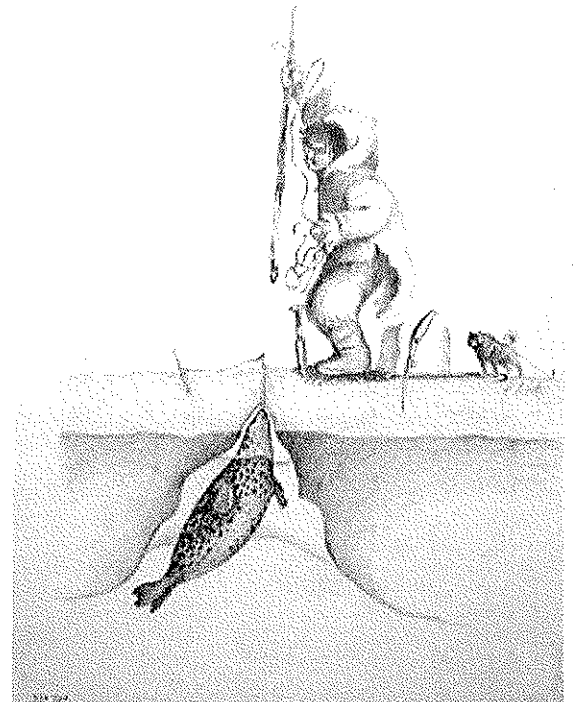


Life is good as summer ends for the Inuit family, and soon they will go their own ways leaving the cousins to go theirs. The sun dips far enough beneath the horizon to bring darkness to that night.



The days are getting shorter and colder signaling the approaching of winter. Cold long nights will be here before long, the family must begin to prepare for the long winter ahead. As the ice begins to return it becomes possible to hunt the seal once again, the seal being very

important to the Inuit not only for their meat, but also for their oil and hide. The two husbands and one of the boys venture out onto the ice in search of the small holes in the ice that the seal uses to get his breath. They come upon a promising looking spot and decide that it is time for the boy to learn to hunt the seal and get his first catch. Even though they have guns it is important for the boy to hunt his first seal with the traditional tools, a harpoon and length of rope.

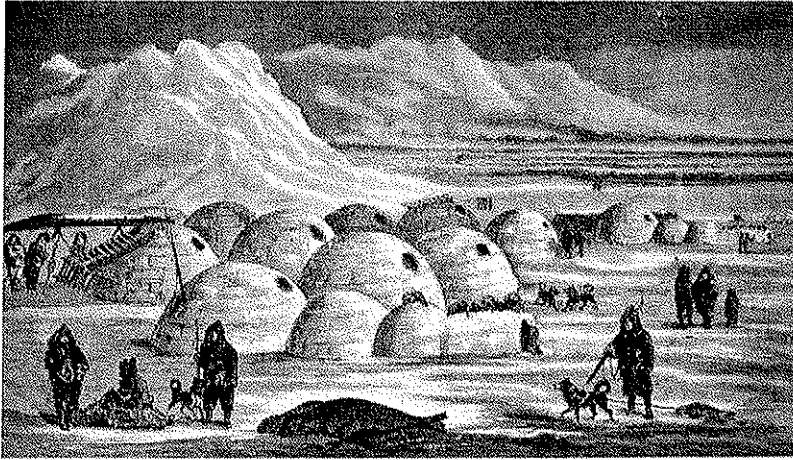


The boy begins by slowly approaching the hole with his harpoon in hand and the wait begins. The boy stays perfectly still so as to not alert any seal that might use the hole to his presence. The boy prays that he will be deemed worthy enough to have the great seal give himself up to the young hunter. Eventually a rippling in the water signals the approach of a seal, the boy is prepared and stabs down with his harpoon, the tip piercing the hide of the animal. Now the struggle begins, the seal attempts to retreat back to the sea but is held by the harpoon and its length of rope. The struggle continues and the boy holds the rope with all his strength and will. As time goes on eventually the seal tires and gives himself up to the hunter, the breathing hole is enlarged and the seal pulled out of the water and onto the ice. Right away the boy gives the seal a drink of fresh water because the seal is believed to give himself to the hunter if the hunter in return gives him a drink of fresh water. The seal lives in salt water, so it is believed that it is thirsty for fresh water. The party loads the seal on a dog sled and prepares to return to camp, they have had to travel quite far from home and it will take them several hours to make it back.



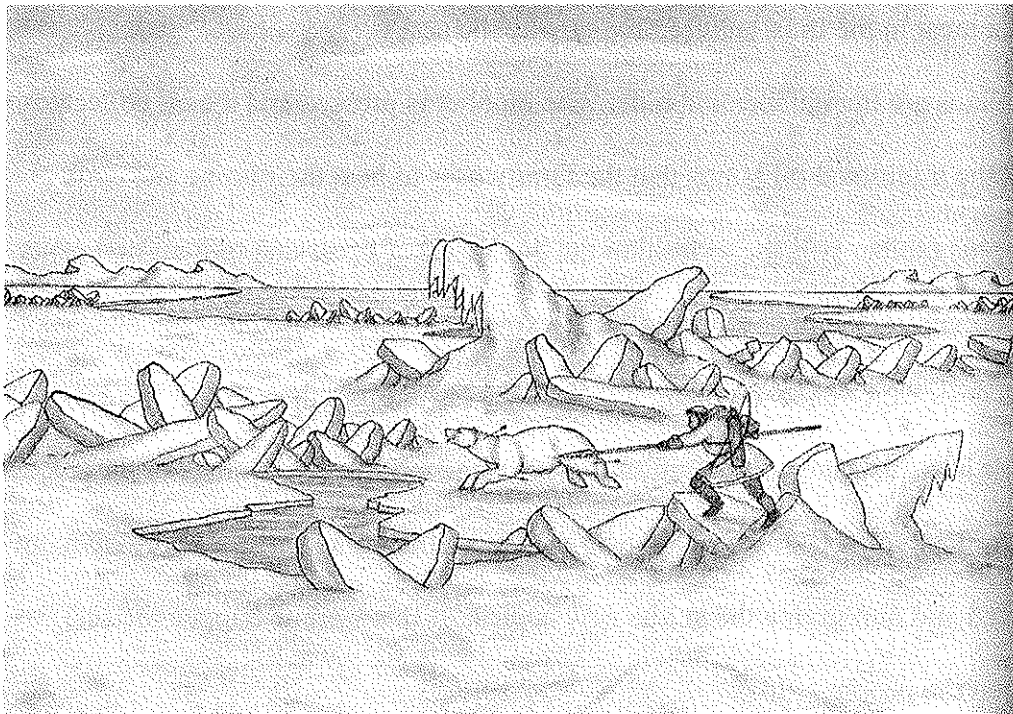
The hunting party slowly makes their way back to camp with the boy's first seal. As they approach the camp the younger members of the family along with the wives come out to meet the hunters and see if they have had any luck. When they realize that they have gotten a seal the family members are excited to learn that it is the young boy who has gotten it and that it is his first. A feast is planned; all the members of the family attend along with members of the community. The boy's mother is the only one allowed to cut up the seal, this is the tradition that has been followed by many generations. As many people as possible come and enjoy a piece of the seal, everyone except the boy. He will not consume any of his first catch, he is giving all of the catch to those who have supported him in his endeavors and helped to guide him to where he is today. This is the way you pay your family and friends back for everything that they have done for you. The seal meat is devoured raw as is the traditional way to eat meat in the Inuit culture. Eventually the seal is gone and all that remains are the blubber and hide. The blubber is pressed and the oil collected to be used as fuel in the traditional oil lamps that the family uses to heat their home and cook their food. The hide his mother will use to fashion the boy a pair of boots and mittens and pants. The only thing that remains is the bones. Grandfather explains to the children that the bones are protected so that the dogs won't chew on them, which is disrespectful to the spirit of the seal. For if the seal's spirit is disrespected it will return to Sedna, the mother of all things of the sea, with larvae and mites that will get caught in her hair and since she has no fingers to get them out she will grow annoyed and quit giving the spirits new bodies. If this were to happen the seal would be there to feed the people.



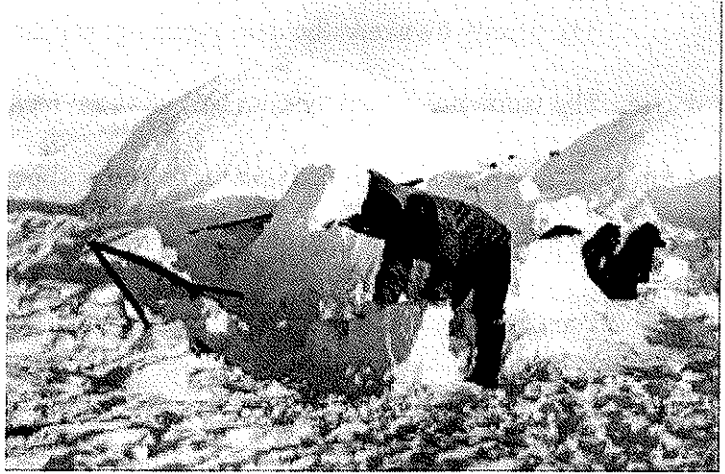


The days are becoming shorter still and it is time to move from the summer camp into the traditional winter igloos. The community will break up into smaller groups to live for the winter. Our family

will be staying together for the winter, but will be living in two igloos close to each other. One of the igloos will house husband and wife and kids; and the other will house the grandparents, husband and wife, and kids. They will set up their igloos together but separate into these groups, it is easier to live in two small igloos close together rather than live in one large igloo. This living arrangement will better allow them to survive the long cold winter.



In order to build the igloos they must find the proper snow that has been packed by the wind to use to make their igloos. The family sets out in search of the perfect place to build their winter shelters. They travel many miles looking for the perfect spot to set up the winter



camp. They come upon an area that has snow packed perfectly to make an igloo. The men begin by getting out their traditional ivory knives, carved from the tusks of the mighty walrus, and lick them in order to give the blades a glass smooth finish that will allow the blade to more easily slice through the dense snow. They begin by cutting the blocks that will be used to form the base of the dome; they use their knives to shave the pieces until they fit snugly together. As the men cut and place the blocks, the women pack the crevices in the igloo with snow so that they will be protected from the cold driving wind of the winter nights. Slowly the dome begins to take shape, and before long it is time to place the last piece at the top; the keystone. The dome is nearly complete; it is missing one important thing, a window. A slab of ice is carved and a piece of the dome is removed to make way for the new ice window. Snow is again packed around the cracks next to the window to ensure that it is protected from the wind. Finally one of the igloos is finished; they children are getting bored of igloo making and spend the time sliding down the hill on their stomachs. The second igloo is quickly erected and finally the winter homes of the family are finished. It is getting dark and so the families settle down into their brand new homes that will give them a nice peaceful place to get out of the cold bite of the arctic winter.

The family awakens the next morning; the men prepare to go out onto the ice to hunt seal again. The women will stay behind and work on making clothing from the hide of the seal that were caught earlier. They need to catch more seal because the meat of the whale that was caught in the summer is beginning to run out and they will begin to rely almost exclusively on the seal for their sustenance. On this hunting trip they will use the gun that the family owns to hopefully get at least a couple seal to supply the family for a few days. They journey many miles with not much luck, the grandfather says that Sedna might not be happy with their use of the white man's tools in hunting her children. They return at the end of the day with only one seal. They will need to go out the next day and see if they have better luck. The shortage of seal continues for many days and the elders of the family wonder why Sedna is not sending the seal to feed them.

The elders from several families decide that they need to come together and discuss the apparent absence of the seal from the ice fields. The group discusses the possibilities of what might be causing Sedna to not send forth her children. Some think that it is because of the Inuits adoption of the white man's weapons and trading seal hide for ammunition and other tools. They believe that the spirits of the animals may feel that they have been disrespected and have returned to Sedna filling her hair with larvae and mites. The elders decide that a healing ceremony would be the best way to try and make Sedna happy with them again. Preparations begin for the ceremony.

In order to have the ceremony they must first build a large igloo that will be able to hold the entire community, that meaning several families. Many of the men and women begin work on the igloo, they are all running dangerously low on food and need to finish the ceremony as soon as possible. They all work together and finish the igloo in two days' time. This igloo is very similar to other smaller versions with one exception. There is a hole in the center of the

igloo that leads to the icy waters of the sea. This hole will allow the spirit of the shaman to leave the igloo and travel down to Sedna. The community gathers in the ceremonial igloo to begin the ritual. They sing and say the right words that will allow the spirit of the shaman to leave his body. The shaman's spirit travels down through the water to the place where Sedna lives. He must traverse an area with rocks that roll around and can crush you. Also out there is the father of Sedna and his dog which must be eluded, after all this he crosses an abyss and makes it to Sedna's igloo. Once inside he appeases Sedna by brushing her hair and removing the larvae and mites that have been infesting her. Once this is done she is pleased and will begin refurbishing the seals with new bodies. With the ritual complete the families return to their homes hopeful that in the coming days the seal will begin to reappear.

The days have become even shorter, before long the sun will barely show itself before dipping back below the horizon. The seal has indeed returned and the family is having no trouble getting meat to survive. They continue to give thanks to Sedna for the seal that she is sending them. They will continue to hunt the seal through the approaching winter. As the day draws to a close the family lays down to sleep because they need to rest, for the long winter is just ahead.

## Winter

Ali Knox



The winter is coming early in the land of the midnight sun. Everyone is aware of the changing weather. The animals are busy getting ready, winter coats are thickening, and others, who dare not brave the winter, have already made a move southward. Because winter is coming early, the family is busy getting ready for the winter months ahead. They dry and smoke meats and store them in caches (elagyaq). They hunt seals (taqukat) and continue to hunt well into the time of snow and ice. They set blackfish traps in anticipation for early freeze-up, so that they may extend the fishing as long as possible. When winter comes the family will trap land mammals like the fox and rabbit as well as muskrat, otter and mink, as their furs are best in the winter season. The seals and the occasional whale that are harvested provide the majority of the

meat and oil that is needed to survive the seasons, while the fox and other animals are utilized for the furs for clothing and bedding. When the spring season comes, so does the large amounts of migrating birds that also contribute to the family's diet. The young men hunt waterfowl with bird spears or spear throwers and blunt headed arrows at close range. There is great care given to the animals and fish prior, during and after harvest.

But now the family is in winter. There is little light, and they call this season the long night. One afternoon the hunters came back to camp with six seals. The mothers and grandmother took great care with the hunters' catch. With preparing the taqukat, the women started by making an incision and separated the skin from the fat with a qapiarsuun (flensing knife) and then the meat and tendons are separated. They worked precisely as the young girls watched. One of the young girls, who will soon enter into marriage with a hunter, has watched mother and grandmother work for many years. She has been taught everything, every preparation taken with seals, whale, fox, and caribou and she has learned everything. She has become a great seamstress and will make her future husband happy with her handiwork.

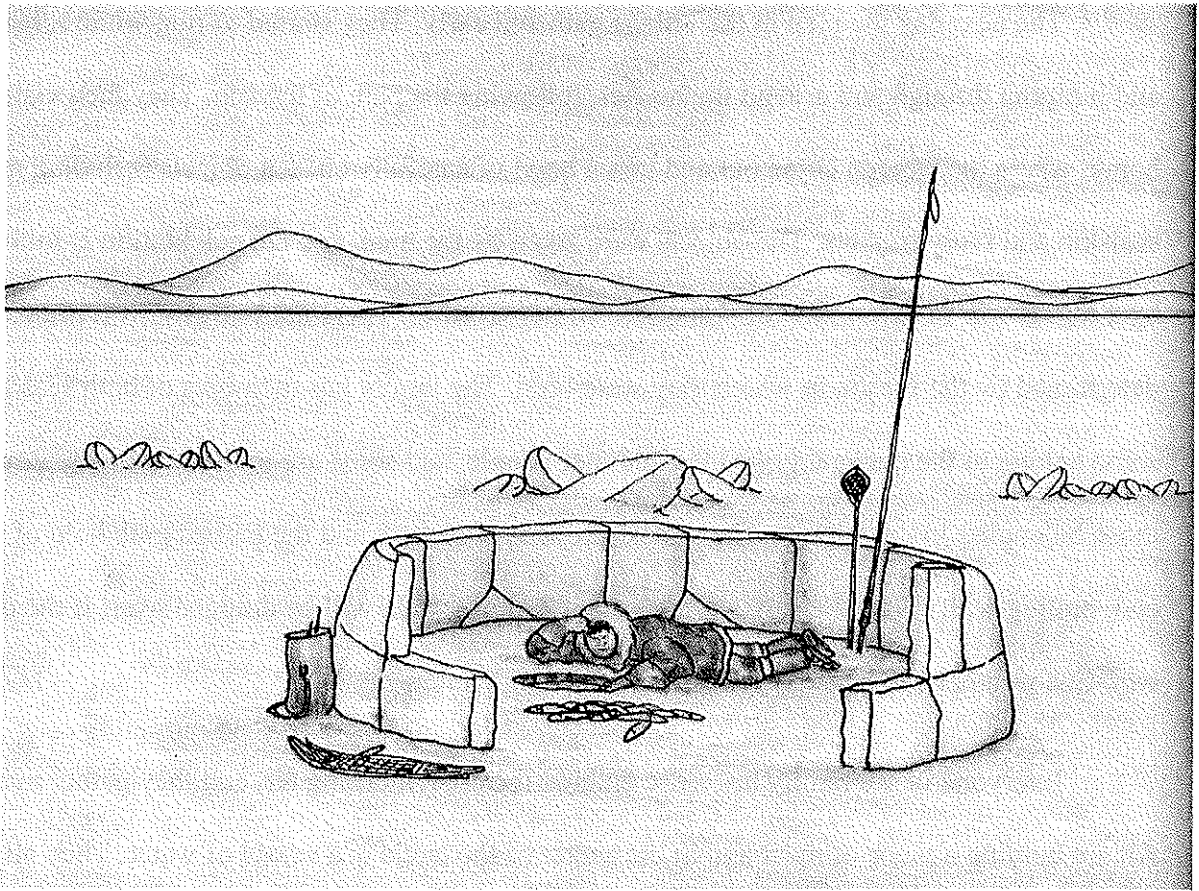
Not only did the preparing of food happen prior to the winter, but also the sewing of parkas and winter clothing. The women spent many hours adjusting the fitting of winter clothing for the growing men and children. There are many layers needed to survive the winter chill. The caribou hides must be sewn as carefully and water tight as possible. To be a great seamstress is a tool necessary for the survival of your family. The young girls know this and are learning with pride and care. Because there is a new baby in the family, a parka will be made especially for the young mother. The parka will have a larger hood than most parkas so that the baby and mother can snuggle close to one another and have enough room within. Each layer of clothing is designed to be lightweight and warm. Caribou hide is preferred because of the hollow hair that

creates a warm pocket of air as insulation. Trousers, mukluks and mittens are also made with great care by the women in the family. The girls have yet to gain sewing kits of their own, but they look at their mothers and grandmothers' kits with the longing that only young girls can have. Each kit is kept close to the owner, and is decorated in the fashion of choice. There is a bone tube that envelopes the precious needles, and thimbles are often attached to this tube.

Another survival object that the women keep close is the ulu (crescent-shaped knife). The girls would watch the ulu being used for everything from cutting patterns out for clothing, slicing meat, splitting sinews and even eating. Grandfather had even made all the girls miniature ulus so that they can practice. Tools toys and art is made in the warmth of the igloos, but only taken on when chores of the day are finished.

During these long winter months the women folk stay inside the igloos continuing to sew clothing as well as kayak covers and tents for the spring and summer, sacks and bags are made from seal skins. New garments were forbidden to be sewed during the winter, though old ones could be repaired, so much sewing was done prior to the stationary winter encampment. It was a difficult task to sew in the almost dark, the oil lamp being the only source of light. Grandmother took great care in making sure that the oil lamp never went out. She got out of the communal bed of furs and skins early in the morning and prepared for the day.





One evening, during the time when the midnight sun became shorter, everyone met in the qaggiq, a big igloo specially built for the *Tivajuut*, the feast. The Angakkuit [shaman] started the ceremony with a prayer on behalf of the people. He asked for the safety of the people during the rest of the winter and for prosperity of the coming year. He began to enact the story of harpooning Sedna. Everyone listened to the magic song that lured Sedna out from the underworld and they watched as the seal spear pierced her body, only to free herself from the harpoon, and descend into the underworld again. A feast was prepared and everyone took part in eating of the celebratory meal. There was a beautiful silence, one that is somehow different from the usual stillness. It is not a somber silence, but rather one that is blissful and contemplative, with the coming year in mind.

The next day the men in the village gathered early. They started to run, while screaming and jumping through and around the houses, following the path of the sun. They then visit each home, where the women come out and toss a bowl of carefully chosen objects including meat, sealskin and ivory trinkets. The objects were taken by the men, and the celebration is followed by a tug-of-war to determine the rest of the winter weather. There are two groups formed, determined by the season in which they were born. The family has members of both seasons, some belong to the ducks (*aggirn*) the summer people, and some are to the ptarmigans (*axigirn*), those belonging to the winter. The sealskin rope is stretched, and the parties grab hold of the end, pulling with all their efforts, in hopes that the other side will be dragged over. If the ducks win, fine weather can be expected through the long winter.

Everyone in the family has since entered the crisp morning air, and they gather in a circle. All are holding a piece of meat and in the center of the circle is a vessel of water. They all eat their meat in silence. They are thinking of Sedna. When the meat has been consumed, the vessel of water is taken by the eldest of the group. The elder sprinkles water on the ground, sips and tells his name and the season and place of his birth (*oxsoaxsavepunga* – me, I was born in). He is followed by an elder woman and the ceremony is continued in that fashion until everyone has gone. Some of the young children who have yet to create their voices are represented by their mothers. Then everyone takes part in the giving of gifts. They place their own items in the circle as a gift to Sedna, asking for good things. They ask for plenty of seals for nutrition and skins, they ask for whales for blubber for oil lamps, and they ask that their lamps burn continually for the months that they need it for survival. They thank Sedna for the arctic char which was caught by the light of the midnight moon, catching the lemmings and collecting the bird's eggs which are among the rocks and the other wild game animals they were successful in harvesting. The

community looks towards a hut from which a cry has just been uttered, and two enormous figures emerge. They have painted masks of sealskin. They are qailertetang, Sedna's companion in the depths of the sea. The qailertetang approach the group and the group backs away from them in fear. The women and men are then segregated and paired off. The qailertetang chase each pair of man & woman to the hut of the woman. Each pair is now married for a day and night (*nulianititijung*). The qailertetang go to the shore and ask for the bitter southern wind to be still and the northern wind is invoked. When this is over the men of the community chase the qailertetang and violently attack, pretending to kill. The qailertetang awake to a new and beautiful beginning. Another feast is prepared and eaten and followed by a meal of *igunaq* (aged walrus meat).



After the festival the community resumes their activities within their family igloos. Today was another special day for the daughter of this family. She is to marry in the Spring and is constantly preparing to become a new wife. Today she will acquire more tattoos. When she first met the man she is to marry she only had them on her hands and wrists, but she will begin tomorrow with new tattoos on her forehead and cheeks. Her future husband will be surprised at the new woman he will be taking home with him across the sea. The tattooing was very painful, but the family believed it was necessary so as not to have a miserable place after death.

The winter continues in this fashion, with the men hunting seals until the breathing holes freeze over, trapping land animals and making tools for the spring fishing, and the women within the huts taking care of the catch of the day, preparing meals, and sewing and telling stories. The winter is long, and much gets done. As the weather worsens and the animals are depleted, thoughts of starving are not fully in the backs of their minds. It is a constant struggle for the family to suppress the worry, but they do so with the support and good hearted nature they give one another. They know life is hard especially when facing the long night, but they also know that life is good in the land of the midnight sun.

## **Reflection**

*Joey Ramirez*

There are many points that I would like to bring up about the writing of this research paper and some of the key events that took place. My job in the project was to write the introduction of the paper and talk about some events that might take place during the spring seasonal round. In order to do this I had to of course research what the Inuit's traditionally did

during the spring season. Some of the tasks included finding out the family structure, finding out traditional roles of each family member, and discovering activities and sacred rituals that were performed. It was important for me to really get the perspective of the Inuit people. I wanted to portray the emotions, the beliefs, and the physical attributes that are what make up these native people. All of this eventually culminated into what would be Part A of the narrative jointly written by every member of my family. We were to focus on the Inuit people and their traditional seasonal round. Each season was written exclusively by one member of the family. After each season was written we came together and connected the seasons going through a final edit and writing transitions that would suit the needs of each individual section.

Some of the events that took place in my paper were the grandparents feeling the spring's first sun. I wanted to make this an important event because it signaled the beginning of a new season. The warming of days meant that their traditional winter home, an igloo, would begin to melt and they needed to find a new location to live. The sun becoming more prominent was not necessarily the best however because the sunlight reflecting off of the white snow had the potential to cause sun blindness(Bennett, and Rowley). The warming sun also allowed for the ice to thin which meant that fishing could resume. Another event that took place was the grandmother walking into the home. I wanted to draw attention to a few details such as the spruce on the ground. This is what the Inuit traditionally used as flooring in their homes ("Cree Hunters of Mistassini). I placed a fire there for warmth and I gave the first knowledge of who lived in the family structure which in this story included two grandparents with two daughters and their husbands. There were also several grandchildren one of which was a boy who was coming of age.

I talked about other events such as the boys first seal hunt. I wanted to show some typical important rites of passage. I thought this was particularly important because I could localize specific emotions that the boy might have been feeling after such a momentous occasion. The pride he felt for providing for his family, being one of the men. It also gave me the ability to show how specific rituals that take place such as the honoring of Sedna. I purposely talked about an event that happened in the character "grandpa's" past. It was the death of his father and the starvation of his mother. This allowed me to bring in some history. For instance it is true that the Inuit often do not learn to swim and can drown in the water easily(Bennett, and Rowley). This is a very common occurrence. Other events that have been written in history are certain periods of starvation that occur in certain families. A lack of animals can result in this and often times this is blamed on improper respect given to Sedna or other spiritual connections ("The Living Stone"). The most recent occurrence of mass starvation occurred in the 1950's.

Overall this paper reflects the contribution of every member of my family each carrying equal weight with one another. When we worked together it was smooth and cooperative, and individually it was challenging and exclusive. Having 4 members created the opportunity to keep the traditional spring, summer, autumn, and winter seasons respectively, each member having their own unique season and events. After much research and critical thinking we managed to put together this concise and detailed narrative that we believe is a good representation of the Inuit people of Nunavut.

### **Reflection**

*Josh Peters*

For my portion of the story I wanted to accurately reflect Inuit daily life without mocking cultural traditions, or exposing sacred relationships best left in private. My season highlights the

impact that trade with Europeans had on Inuit culture. Specifically I read that the Hudson Bay Company had a stranglehold on all trade in the Nunavut region, and that new trading posts were opened in the Victoria Island region around 1920, and across several other islands in the area. I envisioned our family being one of the many Native people of the region who were able to trade with whites for the first time and experience new ways of shaping the world with physical tools. However Wade and I discussed that while this new technology may be exciting to the family, perhaps they would lose their connectedness with the spiritual side of life. While the hunters still paid great respect to Sedna, they did trade away walrus tusks, a traditional item for making tools and spiritual totems, for metal knives and other goods. Eventually Wade and I decided that a Sedna ritual would be necessary for the family to get back to their roots.

I tried to make it obvious that all of life is connected intimately with the creator. I knew it would be disrespectful to share personal prayers, and unethical to make up fake ones for the story. So I had the characters prayed without saying anything in particular, allowing for the great power to be shared without desecrating the sacred. The grandparents and hunters shared their stories of how the animal people were equal to humans and should be treated as such. The walrus, the terns, and seals were all presented as being fully functioning people, providing for their own families as the Inuit do.

The importance of family roles was crucial to the story as well. The young children were responsible for learning from their elders how to be fully prepared adults. I exemplified this through the young boy from the cousin's family went the transition into manhood. This young boy killed a walrus for his first hunt and then the family shared it with the community to recognize his transition into a new role of provider. Constantly the grandfather is reminding the rest of the family about the importance of the traditions of the family by sharing the stories of his

family and their people. The gender roles are complimentary, men are hunting while women are raising the youngest children and preparing the food and shelter.

I suppose if there was one thing I wanted this story to convey more than anything else it would be the importance of the seasonal round and of the Inuit's ability to survive in the Arctic Circle, one of the harshest deserts on planet earth. Being able to survive there requires a family system that is close-knit and able to be as flexible as the weather in the environment. To be able to survive take enormous stores of knowledge, and that knowledge is kept inside the stories and identities of family members. Without the knowledge of the women, elders, and men, Inuit society would fall apart. That is the take away message, the importance of family to survive physically, spiritually, and secularly.

## **Reflection**

*Wade Sutton*

To begin work on our project we began by dividing up the seasonal round into the Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter. I chose the fall because it is a time of the year that heavily involves hunting and preparing for winter, also it is one of my favorite times of the year. The way I started out writing this project was to first research the events involved in the fall and to decide which were the most important to include in our story. I decided that the fall would be a good time to include a boys first seal hunt.

The seal is such an important figure to the Inuit that I knew that they would be included in the fall story. I wanted to convey the sense of respect that the Inuit have for the seal. I hoped to accomplish this by including that the seal is not really caught, but that it gives itself to the



hunter. And in return for this the hunter will give the seal the drink of fresh water and also be sure that the bones are respected. The seal is viewed as an equal and so it is not so much a test of the hunter's skill as it is a determination of if the hunter is worthy and respectful to the seal and Sedna. Only if the person is respectful will the seal offer itself to the hunter. For the information about these events I drew heavily upon the notes for class entitled "The Soul", as well as the lectures on this subject, also the movie "The Living Stone".

The next event that I felt that it was important to include was the way that the community breaks into smaller groups for the winter and the construction of the igloo. This I felt was important to include because it was one of those events that is pivotal to the season. It is something that they do so that they can better survive the season. It makes it easier by allowing the family to live closer to their most important food source during a season that is otherwise difficult to survive. Being close to your food supply in a season that the sun doesn't come up for very long makes perfect sense.

The last and what I think of as the most important event in the course of my story is the Sedna ceremony that they perform to appease her and hopefully get the seal to return. Josh and I decided that we would coordinate some events in each of our seasons into what would come to be the cause of the poor hunting. We decided that since our story is set some time after contact that we would have our family use more modern tools and weapons such as rifles and clothing. We decided that when they were first introduced to the weapons that the elders would likely have approached the situation with caution and most likely have been questioning of whether or not the spirits would see the use of these as disrespectful. This would likely have been a very real concern that the elders would have had. The seal and other animals are so pivotal to the survival of the Inuit that if they were to disrespect the spirits they would have faced a real crisis.

In telling the story I decided that it would be best to be fairly vague on what happens during the ceremony because I was not able to find anything on what exactly this event would entail. I would assume that this is because the tribe does not feel comfortable having the details of this event made public. So in following with that I made sure that I was vague about what the ceremony entails. I did feel, however, that it was ok to detail what the shaman does once his spirit leaves his body because it doesn't detail anything about the ceremony, instead it explains what it is that the ceremony is trying to accomplish. This ceremony is very important to the Inuit because the animals are so important to the successful survival of the people.

In writing this story I feel like I have gained a new way of looking at hunting in my own life. I have always thought of myself as having great skill at hunting and that is what makes me successful, but after researching and writing this story I feel like it is more important to be respectful and humble when hunting. In short writing this story has given me insight not only into the lives of the Inuit, but it has also given a new way of thinking about things that go on in my own life.

## **Reflection**

*Ali Knox*

I need to start by saying that I am not a very talented writer. I love stories and telling them. I love creating characters, but to pull them all together in a cohesive story is always a challenge. The other challenge I faced, was what to include and leave out. There is so much information on the Inuit. They have amazing lifestyles and it is ever changing with the seasons and the animal cycle. I knew that the other members of the group were going to touch on the hunting roles and methods of the men and so I wanted to touch briefly on women's roles, as they

are incredible within this culture. I drew much information from *Inuit Women*, by Janet Mancini Billson & Kyra Mancini. They had insight into the lives of women that I (although omitted from the story) was surprised to hear, and fascinated to learn about. There is this great importance of the union of skills necessary to survival. A hunter needs a seamstress and vice versa in order to make it through the seasons. I also am fascinated with the idea that most children have a relatively free life, with a few simple chores, but that their main goal is to watch and learn. I feel this is a unique aspect of indigenous culture that should be celebrated. Boaz and other had accounts of a feast ritual that took up the majority of my section, but I felt it was so important as it touched on many of the morals and lessons that are dear to the Inuit. Although I didn't go into depth on the meaning, I wanted to paint the picture of these accounts. I loved working with my group members as they are all knowledgeable and interesting people, but with any group project, there are challenges of getting together and creating a cohesive work with no duplications and in attempts to include everything. I think that we did a nice job considering we worked separate for a good chunk of time. I loved their stories, and I wish that I had given them my research notes so that they could write the stories! Wow, what talent. I am most amazed with my group members and with the Inuit people. Of the entire unforgiving environments on this earth, the arctic is where I would least like to live. Every of these places have their qualities and hardships, but it is truly unbelievable that a group of people have been able to survive thousands of generations in a place as harsh as the frozen arctic. I am impressed with their resourcefulness, their discoveries and intelligence, and their spirit. This project has inspired me to look up the way of life of some of my ancestors, the Saami, to see the ways in which they survived their frigid environment of Arctic Norway.

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