

Unit 3: Relationships in the Environment



Learning Competency

The students will demonstrate an awareness of the importance of place and place names.



Learning Competency

The students demonstrate an awareness of the traditional significance of the Inuit relationship to their environment.



Learning Competency

The students will use a variety of information sources and technologies to make meanings.



Learning Competency

The students will demonstrate knowledge of the responsibilities of Inuit as environmental caregivers.

The students will analyze causes and contributing factors to historical events.



Language Development

Consensus- majority of opinion

Observance- an act or instance of watching, noting, or perceiving; observation

Respect- esteem for or a sense of the worth or excellence of a person

Reincarnation- belief in the rebirth of the soul in a new body

Caregiver- someone who cares for another

Priority- highest or higher in importance, rank, privilege

Origins- the place where something begins

Causes- an action that leads

Consequences- an act or instance of following something as an effect, result, or outcome

Predominant- having ascendancy, power, authority, or influence over others; pre-eminent

Misery- a cause or source of distress

Animate- to fill with courage or boldness; encourage

Inanimate- spiritless; sluggish; dull

Discerning- showing good or outstanding judgment and understanding

Superstitious- believing in, full of, or influenced by superstition

Propitiation- favouring, to conciliate or cause someone to look favourably on something

Conception- the act of conceiving; a new idea



Materials

BLMs 1. 19-1.22

Website/CD

DVD *Diet of Souls*



Background

In *Uqalurait*, information about the relationship with animals, hunting practices and the land are available in chapters 3, 4 & 12. As well, chapter 26 provides an excellent summary of the seasonal activities of Inuit in the area being studied and the social organization and practices that were part of seasonal activity.



Opener - Significance of Place

Have enough sets of BLM 1.19 available for your class if they form groups of 4-5 students in each group.

The task for the groups is to build an inuksuk using the rock shapes provided by placing them in an order of importance that the whole groups agrees to through a consensus. Time the groups to determine how quickly consensus is reached.

Each group must explain:

1. why they prioritized their rocks the way they did; and
2. which strategies they used to reach consensus quickly.



Connector - Taloyoak: Stories of Thunder and Stone

Have the students work with a partner. They should access the website: www.taloyoaknunavut.ca/ in order to complete BLM 1.20. This activity will help students make the links between the origin of place names and oral histories.



Activity - Diet of Souls

Read the following to your students:

Three particular animals were distinguished by the power of their souls: seal, caribou, and bear. As with human souls after death, the hunter had to pay homage to the animal he killed by observing a number of rigorous taboos. A failure in any of these observances could turn an animal soul into a crooked spirit, a bloodthirsty monster. Particularly dangerous in this respect were bear souls. [There was] a special association between evil shaman and bear souls. The Netsilik lived in perpetual fear of wandering animal ghosts, since they depended for survival on regularly killing game animals. The very food which was absolutely essential for the survival of society became a source of evil.

Death taboos for dealing with animal souls were the main strategy by which hunting animals became a safe activity. It was thought that the soul of a killed seal for which all death taboos had been properly observed would be greatly pleased by the received attention and would reincarnate in another seal body with the intention of letting itself be killed again by the same hunter. In this sense, a careful hunter continuously hunted the same animal. The death taboo about seals not only prevented the soul of the seal from turning crooked by helping it reincarnate, but also insured continuous successful hunting.

Taken from *The Netsilik Eskimo*, pp. 200-201

Discuss the Inuit belief about the need to show respect for the animal that is being hunted and the consequences for the group if those practices were not followed.

Also discuss the beneficial beliefs about the consequences of showing respect. How are some of these beliefs similar to the ones about respecting the land?

Prepare a set of cards using BLM 1.21 and copying them onto stiff paper. Cut out the cards and place them in a bowl or container at the front or centre of the room. Have the students take turns selecting and reading a "Beliefs About

Animals" card out loud. Ask the students to summarize the belief or practice. Make a list of these on the board or on chart paper.

Once the list is complete, discuss with the students what the implications of the list are. How difficult would it be to follow these rules all the time? What would the consequences be for not following them? What rules do you think would still be followed today? Why do you think hunters are not following all these rules today? Are there implications from not following these beliefs?

Have the students watch the DVD *Diet of Souls*. As they view, student should take notes about the significant beliefs about relationships being expressed in the film. They should list important points in terms of relationship to the land; to the animals; to the *sila* (environment).

Discuss their ideas as a class. Try to relate the breakdown of traditional beliefs and practices and how this impacts on their lives today.



Reflections

Students should visit the website and investigate the elder interviews about animals in order to respond to the following:

Content - What did the elders say about the importance of animals in their lives? Provide some quotes to support your ideas about what was important.

Collaborative - When you read these kinds of stories, what is the predominant feeling you get from the words of the elders? Explain why you think this is so.

Personal - Has anything that you have heard about or discussed in this unit lead you to think that Inuit should change the way they hunt and use the land today? Explain your ideas and support them with examples.



Follow-Up - A Place of Misery

Divide the class into pairs. Give each pair a copy of a paper written by the Reverend Peck in 1922 about his perceptions of Inuit spirituality (BLM 1.22). Their task is to support each other reading the passage and to discuss whether they agree or disagree with the information that it contains. They should present ideas and arguments based on the information they have accessed in this unit to support or deny the author's conclusions.

Some considerations which you might suggest to guide the students' discussion could include:

What beliefs were similar in shamanistic practice to those in Christianity?
In shamanistic practice, there are a lot of taboos and rules to follow. Why were these necessary?

How did someone become a shaman? What were the considerations of taking this course?

Was life for Inuit ever secure based on what you know about their spiritual belief system? How did these beliefs mirror the environment they lived in?

Have every groups present their conclusions to the rest of the class.

Ask the students to form small groups or to work with a partner on a poster that depicts Inuit traditional spirituality. This can be a collage, a mural, a map, a poster - students should explore innovative ways to communicate the key ideas they have come to understand in this module so far.



Classroom Reinforcement

Display the map of the Taloyoak area available in Appendix C after students complete the connector activity. Encourage students to compare their mapping activity with this one.



Accommodating Diversity

Students may require additional time in order to fully access and understand all the relevant material in this unit. Have the text and other resources available in the classroom for students. The website is also made available on CD-ROM so that students who require extra time to explore that resource can do so without requiring access to the internet.

BLM 1.19- Significance of Place
Inuksuk Building Activity

The most important thing is the
animals- where they stay, and the
best places to catch them.

Luke Iquallaq,
Uqaluraait, p.43

The most important thing is the animals-
where they stay, and the best places to
catch them.

Luke

Iquallaq, Uqaluraaq, p.43

The land is so beautiful with its high rivers and
lakes waiting to be fished. It has great mountains
and images form as if you could be caribou among
them.

Rosa Paulla, *Uqaluraait*, p. 118

The living person and the land are actually tied up together because without one the other doesn't survive and vice versa. You have to protect the land in order to receive from the land. Mariano

Aupilaarjuk, Uqalurait, p.118

When people arrived in an area, they gave
the land a gift. This was left at the
tunillarvik, a single stone or cairn.

Uqalurait, p. 119

The camps that our forefathers used to have, the places that they used to camp in summer and winter, you can tell by seeing them ...that they did things very well ... Even the animal bones were put into cracks; they did not leave them just lying on the ground.

Annie Okalik, Uqaluraik, p.120

The name of the land was the name of the people ... our ancestors were all from different places and were known by different names ... The land, rivers and lakes where people hunted and camped all have names, and the people would be called by the name of the land where they were from. Barnabas

Pervouar. Uaalurait. p.121

When people had been living in one region for too long, they could feel the land changing. They referred to the land becoming "too hot". For the health of the land and the animals, they needed to move.

Uqalurait, p.121

Sacred places occur where the boundary between the spirit world and the world occupied by mortals was permeable. Normally, this boundary was invisible and only shaman possessed the ability to cross it.

Uqalurait, p. 121

BLM 1.20

Taloyoak: Stories of Thunder and Stone

Find the meaning of Netsilingmiut according to Philomena Totalik:

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In the space below, use the information provide in Bernadette Uttaq's narratives to try to construct a map of the area she is describing:



BLM 1.21

Beliefs About Animals

All objects, animate and inanimate, contain an *inua* or inner soul. These *inuat* had a human form, a reminder of a distant past when animals transformed into human beings at will.

Uqalurait, p. 43

The greatest peril of life lies in the fact that human food consists entirely of souls. All creatures that we have to kill and eat, all those that we have to strike down and destroy to make clothes for ourselves, have souls, like we have, should that do not perish with the body, and which must therefore be propitiated lest they should revenge themselves on us for taking their bodies.

Ivaluardjuk, *Uqalurait*, p. 43

Animals killed by humans reported on their treatment at the hands of their captors when they returned home. Any show of disrespect by humans could offend the animal, making it impossible to hunt the animals of that species.

Uqalurait, p. 44

Animals gave themselves to the people but only to those they deemed worthy, those who lived good lives and respected the animals.

Uqalurait, p. 45

He had insects as amulets at one time. These insects die in the winter and return to life with the warmer temperatures. ...When he was all alone trying to gather seagull eggs in the springtime he fell down a cliff...He dies instantly. He awoke to discover that one side of his face had melted through the ice. Apparently he had been dead for a long time and returned to life.

Mark Ijjangiaq, *Uqalurait*, pp .48-49

I remember catching fish on the spawning beds (igliit). It was so deep the only way you could recognize the male was by their white fins... You shouldn't take the female. If you do the fish won't come back. You have to find another fish bed.

Kuumuk, *Uqalurait*, p. 75

Arnaitok Ipeelee, *Uqalurait*, p. 180

...There was a famine one year, they could not catch seals because someone had gone to get shrubs for firewood before a seal was actually killed. One has to do first things first. After that they died of starvation and degradation was committed by eating the dead...

Arnaitok Ipeelee, *Uqalurait*, p. 180

My sister wasn't allowed to eat caribou marrow, but she broke the taboo. She longed for caribou head and so she ate bits of caribou head. She never told anyone and that was the cause of her sickness because she had kept it to herself.

Rosie Iqallijuq, *Uqalurait*, p. 183

There was a hunter that was not afraid of walrus. He boasted that while everyone was afraid of walrus he was not afraid of them. He went on to add that when the walrus were on top of the ice and when they were walking they looked like lemmings. ...The walrus had surfaced by his *qajaq*, grabbed him, and dove with him.

Suzanne Niviattian, *Uqalurait*, p. 59

When a boy was big enough so that he would start to wear clothing, the clothing was made so that the seams were not tight... This was done so that when he grew up and came upon caribou he would have plenty of natural blinds in order to get close to them.

George Agiaq Kappiannaq, *Uqalurait*, p. 316-7

The Eskimo believe that many animals, like human beings, possess souls, and that many inanimate objects, such as rocks, mountains, icebergs, etc. have together with animate objects, what is called, their *innua*, i.e. owner or being. The *innua* chiefly of men and bears may become the familiar spirits of the magicians (*angakoet*) and are then called *tongait* (spiritual rulers). These spirits, so the magicians say, have power over the souls of animals, and when solicited by the magicians can make such an easy prey for the hunters. This is done, it is said, by depriving the animals of their discerning powers, which is called "the life of the soul". In this connection there are two important points which must be considered, and which throw light on most of the superstitious practices which are observed by heathen Eskimo, viz: The soul's life given by the spirit, and the life taken by the hunter. For the magicians are commanded by their spiritual rulers (familiar spirits) to order various kinds of abstinence and other customs to be observed [taboos], in recognition of the soul's life given, while means of propitiation (the animals pay [or payback]) must be made by the hunter. Various peculiar customs connected with family life, sickness, and burial are also observed, regarding which I cannot write here.

Cairns are generally made of graves. The dead are buried as quickly as possible, but on the third day the relatives of the deceased visit the grave and walk around it three times. For the three days following a death, the inhabitants of the village must not use their dogs on hunting expeditions, but must walk to hunting places.

The Eskimo believe that in future life, and a tradition bearing on their conceptions of heaven ... This speaks of a large "house on high which is full of light," where the inhabitants celebrate with much joy not the time of their birth, but their decease. Storms rage, and famine is often known in Sedna's (a malignant type of woman) abode, which is under the earth. This is the place of misery.

¹ Taken from *Representing Tuurngait*, p. 7-8