
Each family lives in a homemade canvas tent large enough to accommodate as many as ten people. Cooking is done on a camp stove, clothes are washed, food prepared, equipment repaired, and people sleep on a thick bed of foam and caribou skin mattresses — often all at one time. The always active children run in and out of each tent in their play and eat and sleep where and when it pleases them.

From May to September, clusters of two to ten families can be found camping along the sea coasts near each Inuit village. And while summer provides the opportunity of a holiday from the more crowded towns, it is also the time when men and women turn their attention to the opportunities to capture those animals which only come North for a few months, or even weeks, of summer. In groups of two or three, men will set off walking 50 to 100 km inland to seek caribou, or travel in several boats in search of small whales or walrus — animals absent from the Arctic for nine or more months each year. And it is at this time that teenage boys begin their first serious training as hunters.

By the end of summer, large supplies of meat and fish have been prepared or already sent back by canoe to the towns so that all Inuit — worker and hunter, young and old — can receive a portion. By the end of September, the winter pace of each Inuit community begins again as the sea starts to freeze and the snow covers the land. For the first time in three months, nearly all the residents are again in town, returning to their regular employment, and preparing for winter seal hunting and trapping.

Winter activities

Community and family winter activities are centred in the settlements and hamlets in which Inuit have resided since the 1960s. The adults who earn wages follow a work day much like that of people in southern Canada. The one notable difference is that, while southerners travel to work by car or public transport, Inuit walk or drive snowmobiles.

The end of summer means a new routine for village children, too. Each Inuit community has its own school and provides a curriculum from kindergarten up to middle secondary. In some cases, students receive training in their own language, *Inuktitut*, in the early grades.

Village residents who are neither workers nor students spend their days in more traditional activities. For the men, this means preparing their snowmobiles and sleds for a day of hunting. Only the worst, windiest days prevent hunting. Once each man has made his preparations — packing rifles, stove, spare clothing, and extra fuel — the hunters set off alone or in pairs to hunt ringed seals within a day's journey of the town. For longer trips, in search of caribou or polar bear, as many as five hunters will form a party and carry with them enough fuel and equipment to be self-sufficient for several weeks.