

## Cultural Life

Inuktitut, the language spoken by Canadian Inuit, is part of the Eskimo-Aleut linguistic family. It is intelligible to Inuit living from Northwest Alaska, all across Canada, through to Greenland. Linguists have identified ten main Canadian Inuit dialects.

While Inuktitut evolved as a spoken language, with its own rich oral tradition, no indigenous writing system was present until the late nineteenth century, when an English missionary developed a syllabic writing system for the language. This syllabic orthography is still in use today by the Inuit of Quebec and of the eastern and central areas of the Northwest Territories, or roughly two-thirds of all Canadian Inuit. In Labrador and in the Western Arctic, two versions of the Roman writing script are used to record Inuktitut.

It is estimated that 95 per cent of Inuit are literate in the syllabic orthography, in the areas in which it is used. The written work most familiar to all Inuit is the Bible, which was the first book translated into Inuktitut. According to the 1981 census, Inuktitut is the first language of two-thirds of Inuit households, but about two out of three Inuit also speak English.

Today, Inuit use their writing system to record the thoughts of their elders, to transmit information across the Arctic through a number of widely read magazines and journals (*Inuktitut Monthly*, *Taqralik*), and to ensure the continuation of their language.

There are a number of Inuit authors who have made their names by publishing in English, among them, Minnie Freeman, Markoosie, and Nuligak, who have written accounts of their experiences as Inuit in the modern world, and set down many of the stories that comprise Inuit oral culture.

### Comparison of Orthographies

This is the story of the most spectacularly beautiful of the many scattered clusters of humanity which dot the frigid shorelines of the Canadian Arctic coast. Pangnirtung, squeezed onto a narrow strip of land between the mile-high peaks of the Cumberland Peninsula and the chilling depths of the Pangnirtung Fiord, in an unbelievable land carved boldly from the Precambrian granite of the Canadian Shield by the savage pressure of ancient masses of ice, moving mountains which dwarfed by many thousands of feet even the highest of the 7000-foot peaks left in their wake as they receded northwards leaving a

[illegible]

$\langle \sigma^z \rangle$ ,  $\langle \sigma^x \rangle$ ,  $\langle \sigma^y \rangle$ ,  $\langle \sigma^z \rangle$ ,  $\langle \sigma^x \rangle$ ,  $\langle \sigma^y \rangle$

Ukua unikkaaqattut kajaarnartumik kanaaput ukiurtaqatungin sijjiamiittut qanigimatic inuqaqtunik. Pangnirtuut nunakittukluungmat tamanna qaqaqamut tinitartuup nuvuuttiangujalua, ammalu pangnirtuut kangittukutangullini, nunanga qaqaqamut kamanajartuq taisumanialuk qaqa-rugpalliallaurmata aumatistivvialliluni nunaq ikganigk taisumania-qaaluk nilangmut singitauviallinir-mata maannalirtumi takuminar-lirnat nunanga taisumanikallauritulli qaujimaajallaurtuq qallunaat imana Baffin Island inuutt qikiptaalk, silarjuuliami anginipaanut qikiq-tant tallimaajalluni.

English

### Inuktitut in syllables

Inuktitut in Roman script