Inuit, (pronounced IHN yoo iht), are a people who live near the Arctic. Their homeland stretches from the northeastern tip of Russia across Alaska and northern Canada to Greenland. Many Inuit consider the term Eskimo insulting. Inuit means “the people or real people” and it comes from a language called Inuit-Inupiaq. The singular of Inuit is Inuk, which means person. The Yuit, another group of Arctic people are called Inuit too. Many Inuit spend much of their time hunting and fishing.

The diet of the Inuit varied from location to location and according to the seasons of the year. On the Alaskan coast the kill of a single bowhead whale provided tons of meat for an Inuit community. In other parts of Alaska during the fall they would hunt caribou. Also, smaller animals like hares and foxes were part of their diet. They would often eat meat raw or frozen. When they cooked meat, they used pots made from a soft stone called soapstone.

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Using the skins of animals, the Inuit would make their clothing. Styles differed by area but most all clothing consisted of a hooded jacket called a parka, trousers or leggings, socks, boots and mittens. The Inuit wore goggles of wood, bone or ivory to reduce glare from the sun. The inner hairs of the caribou skin were warm and the skin was lightweight. They would decorate their clothes with beads and charms.

Most Inuit traveled on sleds during the winter months. They made two types of sleds: plank sled and frame sleds. The Inuit preferred wood as the material and where wood was not available, they would use whalebone and frozen animal skins. Both types of sled were pulled by dogs. The Inuit also used two types of boats: the kayak and the umiak (OO mee ak). The Inuit hauled their belongings in umiaks when they moved camp and they used the kayaks for hunting walruses and whales.