



# The Intuit People



# An Overview

- Inuit people, while usually being known for inhabiting Alaska, also live in parts of Greenland and Canada.
- Their languages are part of the Inuit-Yupik-Unangan family, and their form of sign language is critically endangered.
- Inuit means “The People”
- The current population is around 148,863
- The Inuit, along with Yupik, Iñupiat, and Chukchi peoples, were formerly known as Esk\*mos. This term is now considered offensive and a slur.
- Historically, the Inuit people traded with early settlers, while possibly being hostile to French fur traders.
- The Inuit did not occupy lands wanted by European settlers, and for the most part weren’t forced off their land.
- 1939 resulted in a Canadian Supreme Court decision which ruled them as “Indians” and under Canadian jurisdiction.
- Many Inuit individuals were converted to Christianity, due to an overwhelming amount of visiting missionaries.

# Historical

## Gender Roles:

- Strong gender roles, not set in stone
- Women performed most domestic tasks, but would also learn to hunt out of personal choice or necessity
- While men were away hunting, they needed to know how to cook and sew

## More Info:

- Polygamy was fairly common, but it was always one man with multiple wives (if he could afford it). AKA Polygyny.
- Men were the head of the family, but both sides could demand divorce
- There are theories of a third gender in Inuit society. This involves a gender being neither male or female, yet male and female at the same time.
  - This category was created through Shamanism.
  - As adults, men and women fulfilled the gender roles determined by their sex assigned at birth, but according to upbringing would perform those of the opposite sex.

# *Sipiniq*

- Sipiniq: sipi, meaning “to split”
- In Inuit culture, a person who is believed to have changed their sex at birth.
  - Their gender is treated as being the same as their perceived original sex
- The idea is that a newborn infant might have been perceived as having male genitalia that “split” to become female genitalia. This infant would go forth as a man in society, performing male duties, while having female genitalia.
- This can be considered a third gender, or in modern society, as an example of transgenderism.
- A newborn infant acting as a woman in Inuit society, while having male genitalia, was possible, but much more rare.
- Being a sipiniq generally lasted until puberty, but sometimes continued throughout the individuals life.
- Sipiniq would often marry other Sipiniq, but were not barred from marrying a cisgender individual.
- They were also considered very spiritual, and were prime candidates for the shaman role.
- It is also theorized that the Sipiniq were intersex children whose genitalia were ambiguous

