

Children

Children in the Arctic, like anywhere in the world, learn by observation, imitation and practice. Much of the learning takes place by trial and error. Inuit teaching styles are not normally based on lecturing. Rather, they teach children certain things with daily activities such as hunting, sewing, working, or fixing things through modeling. Elders will often say that they have no schooling but they are not aware that they learnt from their parents and elders about life in the North through imitation, trial and error. Formal education only came around in the 50's and 60's.

Children in the Arctic are known to stay up late or stay up all night. Warmer weather often makes sleeping difficult for everyone when the sun shines 24 hours a day. Children play all night when it does not get dark at all. In the past, Inuit would hunt all night or as long as they could to get as much game as they could while the light lasts. When Inuit were located to the communities, the school took complete control of the children as the parents could not communicate with the southerners. Parents did not speak English. Fear of the "Qallunaaq" (Whites) was common as they were thought to be arbitrary and "Bossy". Inuit parents were afraid to say "no" to the qallunaaq as their family allowance and other resources may be taken away from them. (Which was a scare tactic that the qallunaaq used to have complete control over Inuit. And it worked).

Children today are no different from other children. Some tend to stay up late without "proper" supervision. Some children grew up being able to stay awake all night, but unlike today, they had watchful eyes looking out for them. Today, children tend to play outdoors without proper adult supervision. One may see a two year old 3:00 in the morning, playing alone. Children having children has also contributed to this. Children are children, they need proper supervision/guidance to get the best of this world. It's the adults who need to wake up and take proper care of their children.

Children learn about life and living in the North by playing games. Many of the Inuit games are geared towards practicing to become adults, or living in the Arctic. Playing outside in the snow may be a great deal of fun for children but, in reality, they are practicing to be outdoors. Playing with snow helps the child to develop "snow" skills that she/he may need later on in life to survive. Sliding in the snow teaches the child about snow texture. Making animal figures with a knife/ulu¹ helped the child to develop knife/iglu building skills. Harpooning animal figures also helped children to practice their hunting skills. Throwing snowballs at a target helped children to better their aim.

The world would be so boring without children. Let's take good care them.

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September 2008

¹ An Inuit knife consisting of semicircular or crescent-shaped blade and a handle centered behind the non-cutting edge, traditionally used by women.