

You're A Visitor

First, I'd like to thank Brian Manning for inspiring me to write this article. Brian is one of few people who bring the best out in me when I'm around him! I normally have great confidence when he's around! I even speak slightly better English when he's around! Qujannamiiraaluk Brian! You make a difference!

Years and years ago, people from the South felt that they were much more superior to the Inuit. They often forgot that they were imposing on the lives of the people they were supposed to help. Today, things are changing.

When a visitor arrives, he/she will see that things are different here in the Arctic compared to where they came from. There are differences in culture, beliefs, expectations, people, language, food, clothing, outlook, views, land, and different weather! It is important that visitors understand that the North is not like the south.

It is imperative that all visitors understand that they are visitors to the arctic. Local people are here to stay, whereas visitors may leave at any time. Few people have made Nunavut a permanent home after moving from the south, although they are welcome to stay as long as they wish.

There are some things to be cautious about the Arctic/people/language/culture...

-Do not make fun of us because we are different. Inuit try their best not to make fun of other people. Any group of people does not like to be made fun of. Humans like to be treated with respect.

-Do not try to change things. We have lived here for thousands of years. When I visit you, I will not ask you to change things in your house. I will not change the channel on your television.

-Do not tell us what to do. We have been doing what we do for thousands of years. When I visit you, I will not tell you to paint your walls differently.

-Accept the way things are. Things have been like this for a long time. This is the North. Be part of it!

-Try not to change the language and the culture. Inuktitut is a unique, and a beautiful language.

-You are here to serve the people, not to have people serve you.

-You're welcome, but don't take advantage of the people living here, be part of it!

Some things that Northerners hope Southerners will do....

-Learn the local language. People have a great deal of respect when Southerners try to learn Inuktitut. Learning the language shows great respect back to the people. We are all proud of those who attempt to learn. Keep it up!

-Be part of the community. Mingle with the locals, attend community events and feasts. It is a great way to meet and get to know people in the community. Your job will be so much easier if you know people personally.

-Try to pronounce words in Inuktitut properly, to show respect. I take my cap off to those who try. Pronouncing words properly in Inuktitut is highly respected, but an effort is even more respected.

-Respect the elders, they are walking encyclopedias. Even though many of the elders have never been to formal school, they have a great deal of experience in the Arctic; they have lived all their lives in the North. Elder's knowledge is equivalent to Doctorate degrees or more. Many elders do not speak or understand English but their knowledge of the arctic is incomparable. They know the north well!

-Listen to the people. They know what they want. They may have something important to say. They also know their land well!

-Understand our history. Understand the way we are. Where are we coming from? Where are Inuit today? Where will Inuit be in the future?

How will you be remembered after you've left the North?

-Did I contribute to the well being of the community?

-Did I make a difference?

-Was I a fair person? Your stay in the north may rub off to your children. (Your children may be treated with great respect, if they choose to work in the north, providing you did well). Many of the civil servants of today are the children of those who had previously visited and had a positive visit.

-Who did you help? Who helped you?

-How did you help? How were you helped?

-Did I treat people the way I want to be treated?

-Will I be remembered as someone who cared?

-Were you a positive or a negative person?

-Would people want me back?

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