

The inuit in the age of globalization

[Science](#), [Geography](#)



Geography - The Inuit in the Age of Globalization The Inuit people are those people who have lived across the top of the North American continent within the reaches of the Arctic Circle from basically Greenland west all the way to the Bering Strait. While they have a common ancestral culture that stretches back more than a millennium, the tribes of the far north have seen some changes as some focused more upon hunting the caribou and other land animals, supplemented by fishing and sealing and others focused more upon whaling as primary means of supporting themselves in one of the harshest environments on earth. Regardless of their means of subsistence, hunting and fishing remain an important aspect of the Inuit lifestyle, a lifestyle that has been profoundly affected by the process of globalization. From the earliest days of contact, the Inuit were adversely affected by globalization. " From its origins about seven hundred years ago to the time of European contact five hundred years later, very little in the way of cultural change is apparent in the archaeological record" (Morrison, 2004). Relatively healthy from their lives as subsistence hunters and gatherers of the sparse Arctic tundra, the Inuit were completely self-sufficient until they first came into contact with Europeans in the 19th century. By the late 1880s, the Inuit Eskimos were already strongly affected by the same sorts of ' white man's diseases' that had affected more southern tribes, such as measles and smallpox, brought in by traders and whaling ships. At the same time, however, the Inuit have been able to gain increased access to medical care, making it possible for the population to restore itself following initial introduction (Morrison, 2004).

With these outside groups, significant economic change was brought about,

both for the good and the detriment of the indigenous people. Positive changes included the introduction of metal, which could be used for everything from knives to fish hooks and increased the Inuit's ability to catch food for their villages. Negative changes included the over-fishing of their waters, making it increasingly difficult for them to continue competing for their necessary food with outsiders who were better equipped with new technologies. Increasingly, Inuits are turning to money and store-bought items as preferable alternatives to the traditional hand-made products once relied upon (Chabot, 2002). In addition, increased tourism has both emphasized the need for these store-bought items among the Inuit as well as provided a market in which hand-made Inuit products might be sold. Globalization has also affected the way in which the Inuit live through the actions of other countries which have brought about widespread global climate change. This does not only refer to the warming oceans and melting ice caps that severely affect the Inuit homelands, but also to the widespread use of poisons in other parts of the world that eventually make their way into the natural Inuit food supply. " We have experienced, of course, the poisoning of our country food as a result of toxins coming from afar and had to deal with that intensely at the global level" (Watt-Cloutier, 2006). At the same time, though, globalization has given this small population a voice among giants, enabling them to bring their concerns and issues to the global stage and work out solutions with other nations.

Thus, through these various effects, it can be seen that while globalization has brought about significant, lasting and harmful change to the Inuit people, it has also introduced significant, lasting and beneficial elements to

the way in which they live their lives.

Works Cited

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