



**INUIT AND YUPIK; BOTH ARE ASSOCIATED WITH ESKIMO FAMILY WHO LIVE IN IGLOO: A DOME-SHAPED SHELTER BUILT FROM BLOCKS OF COMPACTED SNOW**

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**ABSTRACT**

Eskimo is a member of any of several Indigenous people inhabiting northern Canada, Alaska, Greenland, and eastern Siberia, and traditionally living by hunting seals and other Arctic animals and birds and by fishing. Igloo is a type of dome-shaped shelter built from blocks of solid snow, traditionally used by Inuit.

**KEYWORDS:** eskimo, igloo, inuit, yupik.

**INTRODUCTION**

Eskimo refers to indigenous peoples of the Arctic, primarily the **Inuit** (Canada, Greenland, Alaska) and **Yupik** (Siberia, Alaska), but the term is often considered outdated and offensive, with many preferring their specific names like Inuit or Iñupiat, as "Eskimo" was an

imposed colonial term meaning "netter of snowshoes," not "eater of raw flesh" as once thought. These communities share a common ancestry and Eskimo-Aleut language family, known for their resilience, hunting traditions, and cultural identity in harsh northern environments.



Figure-1: Alaska & Siberia Continent

**Who they are**

**Inuit:** Found in Alaska (Iñupiat), Canada, and Greenland. Spread across Alaska, Canada (Nunavut, Nunavik, etc.), and Greenland, speaking dialects of Inuktitut.

**Yupik:** Inhabit eastern Siberia and western/south-western Alaska. Inhabit western Alaska and the Russian Far East, speaking Yup'ik languages, distinct but related to Inuit.

**Related Group:** Aleut people are closely related but usually distinct from "Eskimo". **Alutiiq/Sug'piak:** Related groups in Alaska, with some historical Russian influence.

**Terminology & Offense**

**Origin:** "Eskimo" comes from a Montagnais (Innu) word meaning "snowshoe-netter". Particularly in Canada and Greenland, where it's seen as imposed by outsiders.

**Preferred Terms:** Inuit ("the people") in Canada/Greenland; Iñupiat, Yupik, or specific language names in Alaska.

**Culture & History**

**Adaptation:** Mastered survival in the Arctic through hunting (seals [*Archaeodobenus akamatsui*], whales [*Orcinus orca*], caribou [*Rangifer tarandus*]) and unique housing like igloos.



Figure-2: Seal, Whale & Caribou.

**Language:** Belong to the Eskimo-Aleut language family, with distinct languages like Inuktitut (Inuit) and Yupik Languages.

**Genetics:** Ancient DNA shows distinct Siberian migrations, including the Paleo-Eskimos who reached Greenland ~4,500 years ago.

**Modern Context:** The term "Eskimo" is fading in official use, replaced by specific names, though it persists in some general English contexts.

**An igloo** (from Inuktitut iglu, meaning "house") is a dome-shaped shelter traditionally built from blocks of hard snow by Inuit people in Arctic regions, acting as an effective insulator to keep the interior warm despite freezing outside temperatures. While often associated with all Inuit, they were historically used by specific groups in Canada's Central Arctic and Greenland, with other Inuit using different materials, though snow's air pockets make it great insulation (the "igloo effect"). More broadly, any dome-shaped structure, like a snow hut or even other temporary shelters, can be called an igloo.

**Characteristics**

**Material:** Primarily blocks of dense, packed snow.

**Shape:** Dome-shaped, which provides structural strength and helps trap heat.

**Function:** Keeps occupants warm through insulation, with inside temperatures rising from body heat.

**Usage:** Traditionally by specific Inuit groups, but the concept is generalized to snow houses or huts.

The Inuit people of the Canadian Arctic and Greenland traditionally built and lived in igloos, which were temporary winter shelters or hunting camps, though today they live in modern homes in settled communities but still use igloos occasionally for traditional purposes. While often called "Eskimos," the term Inuit is preferred, and igloos, made of snow blocks, provided warmth and protection in extreme cold.

**Igloos & Their Inhabitants**

**Who:** Primarily the Inuit (also Yupik in some areas) of Canada's Arctic and Greenland.

**What:** Dome-shaped shelters built from blocks of compacted snow.

**Why:** The snow's insulating properties kept the inside much warmer than the outside, making them ideal for hunters.

**Where:** Traditional use was in the Canadian Arctic (between the Mackenzie River delta and Labrador) and parts of Greenland.

**Modern Use:** Modern Inuit live in permanent homes but might build an igloo for a hunting trip or as a cultural practice.

In essence, igloos were a brilliant, traditional survival tool for people living in harsh, snowy environments, built by the resourceful Inuit for temporary shelter. An igloo is a dome-shaped shelter built from blocks of

compacted snow, traditionally used by Inuit people in Canada's Arctic and Greenland as temporary winter homes or hunting shelters, renowned for their excellent insulation that keeps interiors surprisingly warm despite extreme outside cold due to trapped air pockets in the snow. While iconic, not all Inuit lived in igloos; many used snow for insulation in other types of houses, and modern "igloo houses" can also refer to tourist accommodations or novelty play tents.

### Key Features

**Material:** Made from firm, fine-grained snow blocks cut with a snow knife.



**Shape:** A classic dome structure, providing stability and wind resistance.

**Insulation:** Snow's trapped air creates a natural insulator, allowing temperatures inside to rise significantly with body heat, even to freezing or above, while it's freezing outside.

**Purpose:** Traditionally temporary, used during hunts; modern versions serve tourism or play.

### Traditional Use vs. Modern Interpretations:

**Traditional:** Used primarily by Canadian Central Arctic Inuit and people in Greenland, serving as essential survival shelters.



Figure-3: Igloo & Eskimo.

**Modern:** Also seen as tourist stays (like in India's Manali), luxury glass igloos for viewing the Northern Lights in Finland, or children's play structures.

### How They Work (The Igloo Effect)

**Construction:** Blocks are layered in a spiral, with the builder working from inside, cutting the top blocks at an angle to form the dome.

**Insulation:** Snow is a poor conductor of heat, and air pockets slow heat loss.

**Warmth:** Body heat and small lamps warm the interior air, which rises, while the cool air stays near the floor, creating zones of different temperatures. Inuit people of Canada's Arctic and Greenland traditionally built and used igloos (snow houses) as temporary winter shelters or hunting dwellings, though modern Inuit live in permanent homes; other Arctic indigenous groups like the Inupiat and Yupik also used similar shelters, but igloos are most strongly identified with the Inuit, who used snow's insulation for warmth. Snow is a poor conductor of heat, trapping body warmth inside to create temperatures 20-70 degrees warmer than outside, even in extreme cold.

**Inuit People:** The primary inhabitants associated with igloos are the Inuit, indigenous to Canada's Arctic and Greenland.

**Other Arctic Peoples:** The Inupiat and Yupik peoples of Alaska and Siberia also used snow houses.

### Purpose of Igloos

**Temporary Shelters:** Igloos served as temporary homes or hunting shelters, not permanent residences for most Inuit, who lived in sealskin or cloth tents in warmer months.

**Modern Usage:** While traditional igloos are less common as primary homes today, they are still used as temporary shelters during hunting trips or by tourists in places like Manali, India, for novelty. Temperatures outside can sometimes reach up to minus 45 degrees (chilly!), however, inside an igloo, the temperature can be anywhere between minus 7 and 16 degrees because of your body heat. It's not going to be warm enough for a t-shirt, however, it's much warmer than being outside the igloo. Eskimo (Inuit/Yup'ik) livelihood traditionally centres on hunting and fishing marine mammals (seals, whales, walrus) and land animals (caribou, muskoxen, polar bears) for food, clothing, and tools, adapted perfectly to the Arctic's harsh, treeless environment, using kayaks, umiaks, harpoons, and dog sleds; while modern life brings snowmobiles and rifles, the core subsistence remains hunting, fishing, and gathering local plants, supplemented by carving and trading, with life evolving but deeply rooted in Arctic survival.

**Insulation:** An igloo works by using compressed snow as an excellent insulator, trapping body heat inside a dome structure with a strategically placed low entrance and ventilation hole, allowing warm air to rise and cold air to stay low, keeping the interior significantly warmer

than the outside, sometimes by 60°F [16°C]. Snow is mostly trapped air, which slows heat loss, while the dome shape and lower entry (like a chimney effect) create efficient air circulation, with the inner wall slightly melting and refreezing to add strength.

Arctic Eskimos" refers to Indigenous peoples of the Arctic, primarily the Inuit (in Canada, Greenland, Alaska) and Yupik (in Alaska, Russia), known for adapting to harsh environments through hunting, unique shelters (like snow igloos), and distinct cultures, though the term "Eskimo" is often seen as outdated or offensive, with "Inuit" (meaning "the people") preferred in many regions. These groups share ancient Siberian origins, developing specialized skills for survival, utilizing animals like seals, whales, and caribou for food, clothing, and tools, and maintaining strong cultural ties to the land.

### **Traditional Life & Culture**

**Subsistence:** Relied heavily on hunting marine mammals (seals, walrus, whales) and land animals (caribou, reindeer).

**Shelter:** Built snow-block igloos, but also used sod houses, skin tents, and log homes.

**Transportation:** Used skin-covered kayaks (umiak) for water and dog-sleds for land travel.

**Clothing:** Made from animal furs and sealskins, providing excellent insulation.

**Adaptations:** Developed genetic traits for high-fat diets and ingenious ways to manage 24-hour daylight/darkness in summer/winter.

**Modern Context:** While traditions persist, modern life incorporates technology like snowmobiles and motorboats.

Governance varies, with significant self-governance in places like Nunavut, Canada, and strong Indigenous political representation. There's growing recognition and use of specific names like Inuit and Yupik over the broader "Eskimo" term.

### **CONCLUSION**

An igloo, also known as an iglu, comes from the Inuit word for 'house' or 'shelter'. It was traditionally associated with Inuit's when they went on their hunting trips and they built a temporary house to protect them from the cold. An igloo keeps you warm by trapping your body heat. Igloos are made of compressed snow. Almost 95% of this snow is trapped air, which is a good insulator. This insulation prevents the loss of body heat, and thereby keeps us warm. An Eskimo hunter dressed in traditional clothing was completely wrapped in caribou skins. His parka—a hooded jacket invented by Eskimos—was made of caribou skin and worn with the fur inside. For deep cold and storms, a second parka could be worn over the first, with the fur side out.

### **REFERENCES**

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