

Traditional Inuit Dog Sledding

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Grade: 7

Project Name: Traditional Inuit Dog Sledding

Describe your project:

My project is about dog sledding. I already knew about dog sledding because of my grandparents, but I learned more about the tools that were used, and about the history of dog sledding.

Resources: How did you find your information?

I got the information for my project mostly from books. I also talked to my grandparents, who have a dog team.

What did you find out as a result of your research?

I learned that the runners of the qamutiik were made from bones and sometimes from ivory. I also learned that dog sledding is an important part of our Inuit culture.

Describe your personal interest in the project and why you chose it.

Dog sledding was part of our Social Studies class on the Inuit culture. Also, my family is interested in dog sledding because my grandfather does dog sledding races, and he has taken me for rides before.



Dog Sledding

Dog sledding is fun. My grandparents have a dog sled team. They have about 10 dogs that are kept on the ice outside Repulse Bay in the winter. In the summer the dogs stay on an island. Sometimes my grandparents take me for rides. It is exciting. When I become older, I would like to have dogs and train them to pull a sled because dog sledding is a big part of my culture and heritage.

Sled Runners

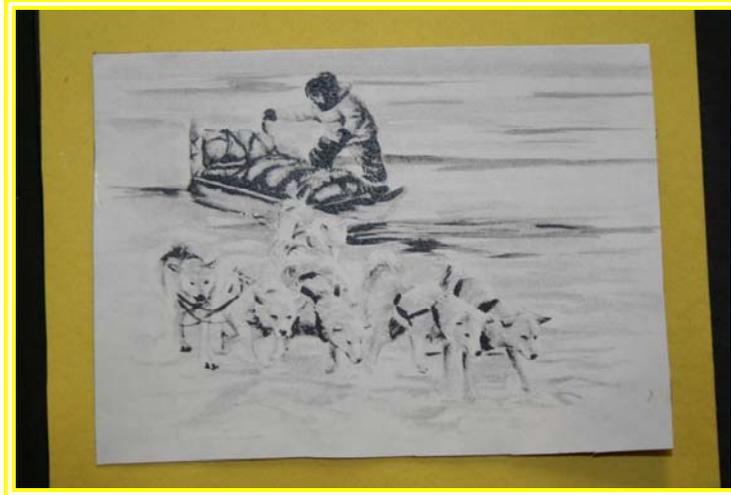
In areas of the Arctic where walrus could be hunted, the sled runners would be made from the ivory tusks of the walrus. Ivory was useful because:

1. Ivory is naturally smooth, so mud was not needed
2. Ivory was strong; they didn't break off
3. They lasted a long time because they didn't melt left in sunlight

To drill holes in the materials used to make the qamutiik, the Inuit used a tool called a bowdrill. The Inuit moved the tool back and forth with one hand to make holes.

The Dog Sled

The traditional name for the Inuit dog sled is the qamutiik. Sealskin rope was used to make harnesses for the dogs and whips to direct the dog team. Today, dog sledding is a very popular Inuit sport.



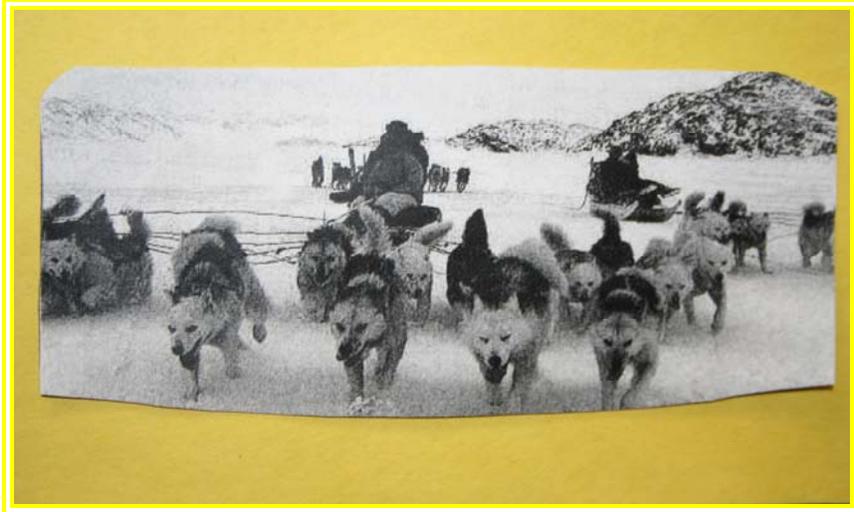
This is a picture of a traditional qamutiik.

Dog boots were used to protect the dog's paws and to keep them in good condition. A dog's paws can get cut from ice or sharp rocks. If the dogs had injured paws, they could not run fast. The Inuit originally used seal or caribou skin to make the dog boots.

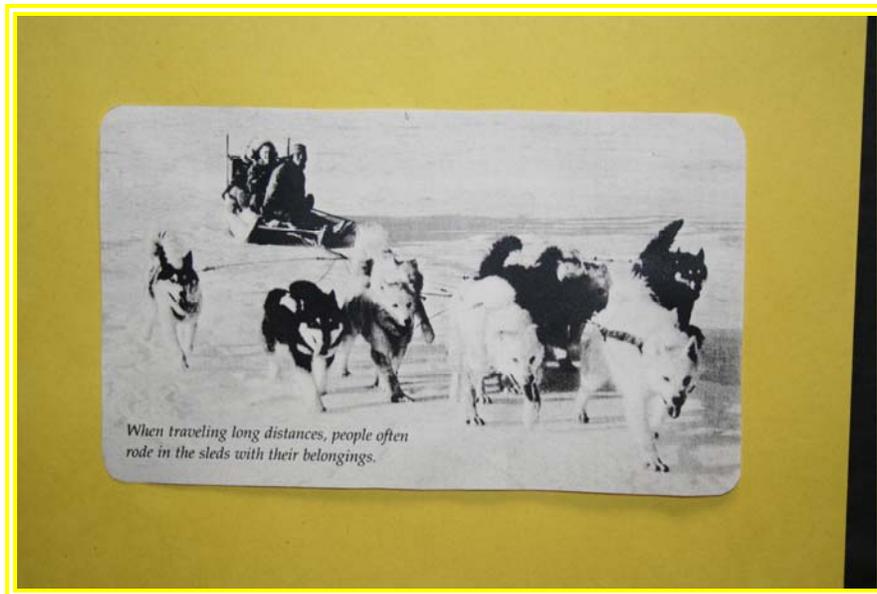
The rope used for the harnesses and whips were made from the thick skin of the bearded seal. This was very strong material. The skin was removed from the animal. Then, it was boiled and cut into long strips while it was still wet. The wet strips were tied between two large stones and left to dry into strong rope.

The sled runners (the long pieces that touch the ground) and the crosspieces that held the runners together were often made from wood. These were tied together with rope in such a way that it allowed each runner to move slightly up or down when traveling over uneven surfaces. This would protect the sled from the rough ground, snow, or ice that can cause damage to the sled.

To make the runners of the qamutiik slide easily over the snow and ice, the Inuit added mud to the runners. This made the runners very smooth and slippery. This made it easier for the dogs to pull a heavily loaded sled.



This is a picture of a dog sled team.



This is a picture of people riding in a qamutiik.