

The Language of SNOW



Language of... Whatever's important to you!

People tend to have a lot of different words for things that play an important part in their lives. For example, in English there are close to 100 different words for money! What does that tell you?

Here are just a few of them: bills, bucks, franklins, cash, clams, dough, loot, greenbacks, moolah, scratch, notes, and dinero.

Many Arctic people live with snow every day, so it's extremely important to them. This is why they have so many words for it.

Think of something that's important to you, plays a big role in your life, or something you enjoy or that interests you, and see how many different words you can think of to describe it.

EXAMPLE: A sport, food, friends, cars, games, etc.

Name of the thing or activity:

List some different words for it below. Try to think of eight!



So, why is it important to know the language of snow—the many different words for it used by native people of the Arctic?



Language is a great way to learn about other cultures and their stories. The way people speak, and the words they use, tell us a lot about them, their landscape, beliefs, and their home ground.

A few Inuit words for snow and ice:

- **Ainu:** Snow that has fallen
- **Misulik:** Wet snow, sleet
- **Afniq:** Blizzard, snow storm
- **Apuyyaq:** Snow along banks or slopes used for emergency shelters
- **Qimugruk:** Snowdrift
- **Auksalaq:** Melting snow
- **Sixxiq:** Hard, crusty snow
- **Nutabaq:** Fresh, powdery snow
- **Quanniq:** Falling snow, snowflake
- **Siku:** Ice
- **Tuvaq:** Solid ice which extends out into the ocean

The Inuit

The Inuit are the aboriginal inhabitants of the North American Arctic, from Bering Strait to East Greenland. Inuit also live in northern Alaska and Greenland and have close relatives in Russia. They are united by a common cultural heritage and a common language. According to archaeological research, the first Alaskan Inuit lived on the seacoast and tundra, where they hunted seals, walrus, whales, and caribou. They lived in houses made of driftwood and sod, and almost certainly spoke an early version of the Inuit language, Inuktitut. They and their ancestors were the first Arctic people to become experts at hunting the larger sea mammals, such as the bowhead whale.