

#### 4. American Indians Adapt to the Environment

American Indians adapted their way of life to what they found in the area around them. Each group found ways to use nearby natural resources wisely, which helped the people survive in their environment. However, in areas with few resources, life proved to be difficult.



One group that lived in a harsh environment was the Inuits, who are also known as Eskimos. They built their culture in present-day northwestern Alaska, northern Canada, and Greenland. These places are part of Earth's Arctic region. The Arctic ice fields have long, cold winters and land that is frozen most of the time.

The Inuits had to adjust to their harsh environment. They hunted and fished animals such as whales, walruses, seals, caribou, polar bears, Arctic foxes, squirrels, salmon, and birds. These [adaptations](#) were necessary for the Inuit to survive.

The Inuits did not waste any part of the animals that they caught. They ate the meat, burned animal fat for fuel, and sewed animal skins together to make clothing, blankets, and tents. They used bones to

make dogsleds and to support tent frames, and they also carved them for tools such as knives and harpoons, or long spears.

The Inuits even learned to fill sealskins with air to make floats. They attached the floats to harpoons that they used to hunt walruses and whales. These floats helped to tire out the animals when they tried to escape by diving underwater.

To build shelters, the Inuits used the materials that they found around them. In the summer, they made tents by stretching the skins of caribou or seals over driftwood. Sometimes they used whale bones to support the roof. They placed heavy stones at the bottom of a tent to keep it in place. In the winter, they built houses, called igloos, out of snow and ice.

To keep warm, the Inuits dressed in animal skins and furs. To protect their eyes from the bright glare of the sun shining on snow and ice, they wore snow goggles. Snow goggles were made from bone or wood and had narrow openings to look through.