

INUIT TRADITIONAL CLOTHING FROM ANIMAL FURS

Over the years and to present day, the clothing made from animal furs has been used by the Inuit. There are several kinds of animal skins used for making clothing. In preparing the skin for making clothing is time consuming and is very tiring to prepare the skins. The skins are used not only for making clothes, but some of them are also used for making dog harnesses and for other things beside human clothing which is explained in the following sentences.

Caribou Skins: The caribou skins are used for so many kinds of clothing. Many years ago, these skins were used to make each part of clothing, used to make tents and made into bags for carrying hunting implements or other things. The skin is removed using an ulu, a half moon shaped women's knife with a handle on the top. Or the remove the skins from the carcass, bundle it up and take it home to their wife or mother. The lady opens up the skin, let it air, then bring it indoors and take off the residual fat or anything left on during skinning of the skin from their catch. Then the skin is stretched on a wooden frame, little hole slits are made on the edge of the skin then the women use rope by putting the rope end through the skin hole then over the wooden frame. The skin is left outdoors during the winter for several months to dry. Then the soften the skin like it has been professionally tanned, the women use two kinds of scrapers, a dull one for taking off the outer layer on the skin, this also softens the skin. Then the woman uses the sharp scraper to remove another layer of what is left on the skin from being cleaned. The sharp scrapper tans the skin and then the skin is completely white. At this stage, the skin is ready for cutting into clothing they wish to make; a parka, pants, boots, mitts or a one-piece child's outfit with a slit in the back so they can use the bathroom without taking off the one-piece outfit. The caribou skin is most used animal skin in all the arctic animals. The skin of the caribou hair of the summer caribou has a very short hair after shedding their winter fur. These skins are often used for making children's clothing.

Polar Bear Skin: The Polar Bear skins when used for clothing, they only use them for making outer pants to use out on the land during the winter. The hair of the skin is oily so nothing stays on the skin or nothing (like water). The skin is cleaned by several women, getting together and working together. The skin is usually sold and are quite often in demand.

Seal Skins: The skin is removed from the seal carcass by making a slit from the lower teeth area right down to the back flippers on the belly of the seal. The skin is removed along with the blubber, the blubber is about 2 inches thick. Then the hunter removes the blubber from the skin, using an Inuit knife, the Inuktitut name for the knife is PANNA. Once the blubber is removed, the hunter prepares it to take home for the women to clean any leftover blubber. Using an ulu (women's knife) the woman takes off all the oily parts from the skin, it is then cleaned again using the ulu then the skin becomes quite thin. It is then washed in the water, and small slits made along the edges of the skin, using sticks, the sticks are placed in the hole then placed on a drying frame, it is

left out to dry by the wind. During the summer the skins are laid on the grassy area, they sticks are place in the holes then left to dry by the sun. To make the skin soft and pliable, the same scraping implements used to clean caribou skins are used, a dull and a sharp scraper. After the skin is soften, it is ready for cutting up and made into clothing. Seal skins are often used for make waterproof boots that go up just below the knee in height. Caribou sinew is used to sew the boots and the boots are completely waterproof. Prior to drying the skins, the fur can be removed using an ulu, they also leave the fur on. Depending on what it is going to be used for. For making waterproof boots, the fur must be removed. When the fur is taken off, the skin where the fur was is black in colour. By leaving the skin on a drying rack for several months outdoors, the black turns white in colour.

Wolverine Fur: Although always bought from the store, the wolverine fur is important in making of Inuit clothing. Hunters catch wolverine occasionally, but they are fast and run to the hills when they see dogs and humans. The wolverine fur is used as a trim around the hood of the parkas, again, due to it's oily fur, the wet from the storms and snow do no penetrate through to the skin of the wolverine.