

SEASONS OF NUNAVUT

As how each season are experienced around the globe, the arrival of each season in Nunavut are always welcomed and by preparing for each season.

SPRING: Spring is welcomed by the Inuit across the north. The Inuit men are busy at this time fixing their sleds, their machines, ice augers, chisels, scoop for removing ice particles from making ice holes, caribou skin mattresses, blankets to keep everybody warm either in their igloos or tents. The women are busy making sure there are caribou skin coats, mitts and boots to be warm out on the land. Buying rubber boots for the thaw as it is 24-hour daylight, and the children play out on the land with catching enough sleep to rest the body and eating. Spring is also the time where families spend a lot of their holidays and days off from work to spend at their cabins. They are also looking forward to the arrival of caribou during the migration of the caribou. Few birds are arriving. In late Spring, the families make special trips to look for fresh seagull eggs and other eggs. The families start going on day trips to go ice fishing and catching fresh trout fish. By this time, the fresh meat or fish is always welcomed after eating 'last year's' catch all winter long. During the Spring, the char make their run from the lakes into the sea water to feed, they swim in schools and feed on small shrimp which are plentiful during the Spring. The fishermen place their nets on the cracks of the sea ice and net the char. At this time, the char are very lean before they can feed on sea water shrimp. The sun is now out 24 hours a day, the sun does not disappear and it's a happy and renewed season.

Summer: When Summer arrives, women along with their children or packing their babies in a baby packing parka and go out on the land for day walks to look for small berries, bringing kettle and cups to make tea out of the land using heather plant to use for making fire to make hot water. They also bring their fishing rods and rod for fish. The fish are plentiful at this time of the year as there are abundance of fish feeding off any food that is in the mouth of small rivers. At this time of the year, the families go on their boating trips or the hunters go together in a boat and hunt for any seals that may be up for breathing. The 24 hour daylight is enjoyed by going for walks at any time of the day.

Fall: During the Fall season, the char are returning to go up the rivers and back to the lakes. By this time, they are very oily and fat. The fishermen place their nets near the rivers and catch plenty of char. The nets are place near the rivers but they are not allowed to place their nets across the mouth of the river. This allows the char to return to the lakes. These fish are placed in the community freezer for their winter food. When the weather is cool enough, some of the char are buried in the gravel, rocks placed over the fish. They go by machines during the winter to get some for food at home. Quite often the wolves will move the rocks and get to the buried rocks. The caribou also start migrating back further north. During the fall, the caribou are very fat, they have a fat that is about 2 inches thick from feeding on plants all summer long. The hunters hunt them and the meat are placed in the community freezer. The fat is eaten,

the taste of the caribou fat is not oily tasting, the families enjoy eating them. Many years ago, if a mother did not have milk to breast feed their babies, the mother will chew on the caribou fat and then feed the babies the caribou fat. Some women like to melt the caribou fat for making Bannock. This was so important when the stores used to run out of lard for frying Bannock. The items used during the summer for fishing and hunting are cleaned and put away for the winter in safe places. The 24-hour daylight has gone for another year.

Winter: The 24-hour daylight has gone. Also, the darkness is 24 hours a day. There is a lot of socializing between families and friends during the winter. The food caught either frozen or dried are enjoyed by getting together, there are no invitations, people who come to visit during mealtimes in the early evening are welcomed to eat as well. No one is ever excluded from any kind of traditional foods.

The Inuit followed their traditional ways when preparing for each season. These customs have been passed on from one generation to the next. As a writer of these articles, I am feeling very uncertain how the climate change will affect the Inuit way of life. There has been devastating changes already; the early thaw in the Spring and the ice not freezing into early winter and the starving polar bears, diseases on caribou and starving wolves. New species of flies and wildlife being seen that have never been seen before the climate change.