

Unit 1: Belief Systems



Learning Competency

The students will engage in discussions about personal and cultural identity and spirituality.



Learning Competency

The students will demonstrate sensitivity to the emotional and personal aspects of identity.



Learning Competency

The students will evaluate the source information and relate it to personal experience and contemporary context.



Learning Competency

The students will articulate with specific examples the complexity and diversity of the elements of belief systems which contribute to the collective cultural identity.



Language Development

Belief system- a set of beliefs accepted as true through the faith and experience of a social group and practiced collectively

Cosmology- the organization and content of beliefs about the origin of the universe

Taboos- any practice forbidden or restricted by beliefs

Spirituality- a personal commitment to a set of beliefs

Shaman- a human with the powers to influence good and evil spirits

Soul- the immortal or spiritual part of a being

Spirit- a supernatural being



Materials

Blackline masters for this unit- BLM 1.1-1.11

Set of 12 posters with values and beliefs statements on the back.

Inuktitut magazine articles.

Art materials for illustrations.
Sets of readings on shamanism.
Learning Log for each student.



Background

For background to this unit, the teachers should read the entire section IV in *The Netsilik Eskimo* and the resource *Representing Tuurngait*. In addition, chapters 15-17 in *Uqaluraît* provide important descriptions from Inuit themselves.

Not provided with this module, but an excellence background resource in the text *Cosmology and Shamanism*. This is part 4 of the Nunavut Arctic College series *Interviewing Elders*.



Opener - Investigating Beliefs

You will require a set of the 12 posters provided with this unit on the resource CD or as BLM 1.1 at the end of this unit.

Consider the size of your class and either divide the students into 12 small groups or into 6 groups and assign each group two posters to consider.

Each group will be provided with one placemat (BLM 1. 2) for each poster. The task for the students is to examine the poster and discuss what it implies to the members of the group. These ideas are to be recorded in section 1 of the placemat.

Next the group turns the poster over and reads the information provided by the artist. What new ideas are identified? Have the group record the new ideas in section 2 of the placemat.

In section 3, the group should list the reasons why they believe this was an important belief for Inuit.

In section 4, the groups should identify any reasons why this might also be important to them today.

Provide time for the groups to present on each poster.



Connector - Beliefs and Taboos

Provide every student with a copy of the article *Taboos, and Other Customs from*

the Past taken from Inuktitut Magazine #78, Summer 1995, pp. 5-19 (BLM 1.3).

This is a long article. Have the students form small groups of 4-6 and decide on how they wish to access the information in the article as a group. Suggest that they take turns reading chunks of the article and then stop to discuss the information. The purpose of the discussions is to identify information that is being provided by the author about commonly held beliefs and about taboos practiced by the group. As they read, each student should add to the list on the T-chart at the end of the reading between beliefs and taboos.

At the end of the article, the groups should look over their lists and try to come up with their own definition to distinguish between a belief and a taboo. Have each group share their definition and come to a class consensus about the definitions for each of these words.

Stand Up, Sit Down:

Have the students review the differences between a belief and a taboo by playing Stand Up, Sit Down. Each student should have a turn at picking a text card from those provided on BLM 1.4. In turn the student read the card calls out either "belief" or "taboo". Those students in agreement with the call stand up. Those who disagree remain seated. Both sides must provide evidence for their decision. The class should use their ideas to build consensus.

Website Taboos:

On the website: *Taloyoak: Stories of Thunder and Stone* are two stories from elders about taboos. One is called *The White Rock* and the other is called *No One Touches It*. Provide time for the students to go into the site and to become familiar with the stories. For each they should use BLM 1. 5 to formulate a response.



Activity - Stories of Cosmology and Shamanism

Read the following to the class:

What I am going to tell you about is something that is known to every child, every child that has been hushed to sleep by its mother. Children are full of life, they never want to sleep. Only a song or monotonous words can make them quieten down so that at last they fall asleep. That is why mothers and grandmothers always put little children to sleep with tales. It is from them that we have our knowledge, for children never forget.

Naalungiaq, Nattilingmiut, Rasmussen 1931¹

¹ Taken from *Uqalurait*, p. 160.

Explain to the students that the term "cosmology" is the collection of stories, which Inuit use to explain the creation of the universe. Ask them to think of what stories we use to do this today? (Biblical account of creation, theory of evolution, the Big Bang theory.) Also within these stories lie values or beliefs about how we should lead our lives. Students are to select one of the stories provided in the collection in BLM 1. 6. The task is to create an illustration for the story that both depict the explanation the story contributes and the beliefs that underlie it.

These illustrations should be displayed as a gallery in the school or classroom so that other students can visit both the story and the illustrations for it.

Souls and Spirits:

Divide the class into two groups. One group will try to build an understanding about the concept of the "soul". The second groups will do the same for the concept of "spirit". Provide each group with a reading for this activity from *The Netsilik Eskimo* (BLM 1.7). Every student will also require a copy of BLM 1.8 on which to record his/her ideas and conclusions. Once the two groups have had the opportunity to discuss the reading thoroughly and to record their ideas and conclusions, every member of group 1 should find a member of group 2 to partner with. Partners share a summary of their reading and also the ideas that their group took from the discussion.

As a class, collaboratively arrive at some definitions for both terms: soul and spirit based on the perspective provide in the information.

Kiviug:

Provide the opportunity for the students to each visit the Inuit Heritage Trust *Taloyoak: Stories of Thunder and Stone website*. Their task is to find the *Story of Kiviug* as told by Judas Iladijuk and to respond to the questions on BLM 1.9.



Reflections (BLM 1.10)

Rasmussen collected some drawings from Inuit in the 1920s. Examine the following three drawings and read the descriptions provided with them² in order to respond to the following questions:

Content - Select one of these images and explain what you think is the significance of both the image and the effect the image had on the person who

² Taken from *Representing Tuurngait* pp. 54, 57 & 62.

encountered it.

Collaborative - Compare the Rasmussen images with the three images of carvings. What do the images in both the drawings and the carvings convey about traditional Inuit life? What were the complex relationships that Inuit had to pay attention to? How is this similar or different today?

Personal - Are any of the images that were created by artists in the past relevant for you today? Explain your conclusion and share your own ideas about where to find help to deal with the challenges of our world today.



Follow-Up - Angakkuit

Read the following to the class:

Human beings have always been afraid of sickness, and far back in the very earliest times there arose wise men who tried to find out all the things none could understand. There were no shaman in those days, and men were ignorant of all the rules of life which since taught them to be on guard against danger and wickedness. The first amulet that ever existed was the shell portion of a sea urchin. It has a hole through it, and is hence called itiq (anus) and the fact of its being made the first amulet was due to its being associated with a particular power of healing. When a man fell ill, one would go and sit by him, and pointing to the diseased part, break wind behind. Then one went outside, while another one held one hand hollowed over the diseased part, breathing at the same time out of the palm of his other hand in a direction away from the person to be cured. It was then believed that wind and breath together combined all the power emanating from within the human body, a power so mysterious and strong that it was able to cure disease.

In that way everyone was a physician, and there was no need for any shaman.

Discuss with the class what they think about this information. They know that shaman eventually did exist. Have the students predict why shaman may have become necessary.

Read the conclusion of the passage:

But then it happened that a time of hardship and famine set in around Iglulik. Many died of starvation, and all were greatly perplexed, not knowing what to do. Then one day when a number of people were assembled in a house, a man demanded to be allowed to go behind the skin hangings at the back of the sleeping place, no one knew why. He said that he was going to travel down to the Mother of the Sea Beasts. No one in the house

understood him, and no one believed in him. He had his way and passed in behind the hangings. Here he declared that he would exercise an art, which should afterwards prove of great value to mankind; but no one must look at him. It was not long, however, before the unbelieving and inquisitive drew aside the hangings, and to their astonishment perceived that he was diving sown into the earth; he had already got so far down that only the soles of his feet could be seen. How the man ever hit on this idea no one knows; he himself said it was the spirits that had helped him; spirits he had entered into contact with out in the great solitude. Thus the first shaman appeared amongst men.

Have the class consider why reliance on powers greater than those available became necessary and how those powers became available. Have them infer what the "great solitude" means. What powers would be found in the great solitude? How did the man know to go to Nuliajik? What information was this new approach based on? Refer to what they learned about cosmology of the Inuit.

Complete the reading of the passage:

He went down to the Mother of the Sea Beasts and brought back game to men, and the famine gave place to plenty, and all were happy and joyful once more. Afterwards, the shaman extended their knowledge of hidden things, and helped mankind in various ways. They also developed their sacred language, which was only used for communicating with the spirits and not in everyday speech. (Rasmussen, 1929: 110-111)

There are 10 elements of shamanism to be studied as part of this unit (BLM 1.11). In order to ensure that every student has an opportunity to engage with the information, there are 10 assignments to be completed. You may decide how this is to be accomplished or you may invite the students to negotiate how they wish to do it. The assignments can be set up as activity centres which students rotate through at their own pace, or as team or partner projects where they share information and collaborate on the assignment pieces. Select a model that best suits the students in your class.



Classroom Reinforcement

Display the posters and placemats around the room for students to view throughout this unit.

Display posters of the spirit drawings and carvings.

Criteria for assessment of assignments should be visible in the classroom for students' reference.



Accommodating Diversity

This unit involves a significant amount of reading. Consider strategies that will make the information accessible to students who may struggle with this. Ideas are available in the *Junior Secondary EL2 Teacher's Handbook*.

Also be sensitive to the cultural issues in your community that may be evoked by this theme. Ensure that parents have a full understanding of the intent and the content that will be covered.



Assessment

Student - Every student should have a portfolio where they can store the assignment work from this unit; there will be a great deal of it produced. As well, every student should be provided with the checklist of these activities and be encouraged to complete each activity as fully and as well as possible before checking it off. Students should seek peer review of their assignments as much as possible.

In addition, students should complete a learning log summary at the end of every unit (available in the Appendix B).

Teacher - Negotiate with the class or provide to the class a set of criteria that you will use to evaluate the assignment work. Make sure that a copy of this is prominently displayed in the classroom so that students can refer to it as they complete the portfolio assignments. Support students in the delivery of descriptive assessment in peer review situations. Model descriptive feedback in your own interactions with students.

BLM 1.1 Values and Beliefs

INSERT POSTERS AND DESCRIPTIONS

BLM 1.2

INSERT PLACEMAT

BLM 1.3

INSERT SCAN OF "Taboos & other customs"

TABOOS	BELIEFS

The definition of a belief is-

The definition of a taboo is-

BLM 1.4 Stand Up, Sit Down

In Paalliaqjuk, around the Talurjuaq area [where the Nattilingmiut live], there was a case of starvation. That is the reason why I cannot use the water from the certain area there- there are human bodies that sank to the bottom of the lake.

Martha Tunnuq, *Uqalurait*, p. 361

[My father] has many names; Uqpingalik is his real name. He has people named after him as well... The reason why he has so many names is that the shaman wanted him to live- he had to be named each time he got sick.

Martha Tunnuq *Uqalurait*, p. 366

You should never call an older person by name. To this day, if I call someone by name and he is older, I feel very uncomfortable. We are always told to respect our elders and never to use their names. If for some reason, just by a slip of the tongue, we called an elder by his or her name, we were scolded. It was forbidden.

Francois Tamnaruluk Quassa, *Uqalurait*, p. 7

Saputit produced great quantities of fish in a short period and were crucial to securing an adequate food supply. As a result, they were considered holy places, and strict rules governed their use. Forbidden to repair tools at the *saputit*, people mended their fish spears and other tools at *sannaviit* (work areas).

Bernadette Iquugaqtuq, *Uqalurait*, p. 372

...the fish would not return along their natural route if the *kakivak* breaks and it is repaired inside the tent. In those days Inuit had all kinds of unwritten laws to follow... At Arviligaarjuk, which is near the ocean, someone once repaired an implement inside his tent, and therefore the fish did not go up the river to spawn. An old man carved two small wooden fish, a male and female. When he put those two carvings in the river to encourage the fish, that very evening they started travelling upriver to spawn.

Jose Anqutinqurniq, *Uqalurait*, p. 372

One must be very careful not to touch the prop of a drying rack. It was only if this [rule] was observed that the bears and musk oxen would be unable to gallop.

Bernadette Iquugaqtuq, *Uqalurait*, p. 372

As a female I am not allowed to use people's clothing, especially men's clothing; but I am able to put on my husband's pants, shirt or boots because there is nothing *tiringnaqtuq* about him, according to my parents. Some men are blessed, I guess you would call it, mostly for hunting. They are called *tiringnaqtuq*, some more than others within the family.

Martha Tunnuq *Uqalurait*, p.372

Menstrual blood was seen as particularly dangerous, and particular observances around it could mean the difference between life and death.

Uqalurait, p. 373

During this season people returned to the coast and began preparing for winter. Hunting was forbidden while winter clothing was being made, and men brought in food from the caches and helped their wives, for whom this was the busiest time of the year.

Uqalurait, p. 376

Many things were used for *aanguat* [amulets], like the bones of fox paws. ... If I remember correctly, these would be passed on from shaman- and in my case, from my namesake, so that I could live a long life... They were not to be touched by anyone but yourself. Anyone who touches them would get sick as a result.

Simon Inuksaq, *Uqalurait*, p. 381

There were things [a mother with a young son] was not allowed to do...During the day, she was not allowed to drink water or eat anything... and so it was pretty hard for a woman who just had a little boy because she was sacrificing herself so that when the boy grew up he would be a good hunter and a good provider.

Bernard Iquugaqtuq, *Uqalurait*, p.13

Or if the sons and daughters didn't listen to their parents in those days, they would die young or have a hard time in later years. The ones who would listen to their parents would live longer and have a happier life and be respected by other people.

Bernadette Iquugaqtuq, *Uqalurait*, p. 24

Anyone meant to become a fast runner was restricted from eating muscle from an animal and was not allowed to sit down at any time. A lot of these practices did produce what they were [intended] to do.

Henry Amarualik, *Uqalurait*, p. 29

In the old days Inuit were not allowed to brag about their catch because the animal's spirits were listening...You weren't allowed to brag about your catch of any wildlife, or even talk while eating, and you always had to share your catch with another.

Buster Kailek, *Uqalurait*, p. 43

Nattilingmiut call it *tuurngijuaq*. The shaman would do the performance at this time. We would see different things. The shaman would change in many ways- only half of his fingers would be there at times. The shaman were able to see what we normal people cannot see... When a person has done something wrong you could see it right in front of you- you were able to see the spirit of that person. If that certain individual will not talk about his problems, it is impossible to cure...He must make amends. The cure is instant.

Simon Inuksaq, *Uqalurait*, p. 382

The boys were taught the importance of having knowledge against cruelty to animals from boyhood throughout their upbringing, as they became successful hunters. They were made to know that if they wounded an animal, they must make every effort to get it...People had to respect heir existence and avoid any form of abuse or cause any kind of suffering.

Joanasie Qajaarjuaq, *Uqalurait*, p. 50

Before cutting up the seal, Inuit would get a handful of drink water from [their] mouth and pour it into the seal's snout...[This practice] was passed on from generation to generation...It is done to be thankful for a catch, because in the future the seal would be coming back again...In this way the seal would be renewed.

Frank Analok, *Uqalurait*, p. 54

BLM 1.6 Creation Stories

Scan from a Kayak Full of Ghosts pp. 19-39

BLM 1.7 Soul & Spirit

Soul

Scan from the Netsilik Eskimo pp. 198- end of second paragraph. P 200

Spirit

Scan from The Netsilik Eskimo pp. 203 last paragraph.- end of indented words p. 205

BLM 1.7 cont'd.

Soul & Spirit

Student Responses

Purposes of the Soul:	Purposes of the Spirits:
Kinds of Souls:	Kinds of Spirits:
Beliefs about the soul:	Beliefs about the spirits:

BLM 1.9

The Story Of Kiviuk

There are many versions of the Kiviuk stories told across Inuit communities. The story that appears on the website describes an act of revenge. Retell how the grandmother planned revenge for the murder of her son.

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Inuit usually avoid conflict because they believe that revenge will lead to on-going feuds. Kiviuk took revenge, but there were consequences to his actions. Describe what happened to him.

What significance does the inuksuk have in the story?

Why did Kiviuk take the beads?

What is the significance of the beads in this story?



Rasmussen collected some drawings from Inuit in the 1920s. Examine the following three drawings and read the descriptions provided with them³ in order to respond to the following questions:

INSERT THE DRAWINGS

Content - Select one of these images and explain what you think is the significance of both the image and the effect the image had on the person who encountered it.

Collaborative - Compare the Rasmussen images with the three images of carvings. What do the images in both the drawings and the carvings convey about traditional Inuit life? What were the complex relationships that Inuit had to pay attention to? How is this similar or different today?

Personal - Are any of the images that were created by artists in the past relevant for you today? Explain your conclusion and share your own ideas about where to find help to deal with the challenges of our world today.

³ Taken from *Representing Tuurngait* pp. 54, 57 & 62.

Scan from *Representing Tuurngnait*

1. Initiation pp.20-22
2. Shamanic words pp. 22-24
3. Irinalutit pp.26-28
4. Procuring Game pp.28-30
5. Visiting deceased people pp. 30-32
6. Healing the sick pp. 32-36
7. Correcting the weather/ Qilaniq pp. 36- 38
8. Killing tupilait pp.38-42
9. Tuurngait pp. 42-46
10. Shamanic rivalry pp. 48-50