Music from the Edge of Civilization
Inuit Music for the Classroom
A Smithsonian Folkways Lesson
Designed by: Christopher Lennard
University of Washington

Summary:
Students will experience the music of the Inuit culture in Canada. In the band arrangement, they will fill one of two roles: the percussionists will keep time in much the same way that an Inuit drummer would in a market situation, though they will add a few new instruments to complement the ensemble. The second role, filled by the wind players, will be to mimic a common song in the marketplace.

Suggested Grade Levels: 6-8
Country: Canada
Region: North America
Culture Group: Inuit
Genre: Throat Singing
Instruments: Voice, Drum, Band
Language: Inuit
Co-Curricular Areas: Social Studies
National Standards: 1, 2, 5, 6, 9

Prerequisites: None

Objectives:
- While listening to “How Much Will I Get for the Ivory Carving?”, mimic the beat of the drum and metal strike in order to feel the beat
- Read through, rehearse and perform the arrangement of “How Much Will I Get for the Ivory Carving”
- While listening to “Seagull/Naujaq”, find the pulse and hear the trade-off between two singers
- Create own throat-singing piece and perform it with a partner
- Play a drum of the Inuit people in the style of the Inuits
- Perform a unique ‘piece’ and shift roles in a quick fashion within the context of Inuit drumming as an ensemble

Materials:
- “How Much Will I Get for the Ivory Carving?” performed by Nathan

- Tambourine-shaped drums with one head and a handle of some sort, along with a wooden beater or mallet
- Space to make a circle

**Lesson Segments:**

1. **Inuit Market Song for Band or Orchestra with Percussion**
   (National Standards 1, 2, 5, 6, 9)

2. **Community Music Activity: Inuit Drum Circle** (National Standards 2, 9)

1. **Inuit Market Song for Band or Orchestra with Percussion**
   a. Listen to recording of “How Much Will I Get for the Ivory Carving”.
      i. Pat the beat along with the drum and metal piece
      ii. Try to sing along with the chorus (correct words are not required, but approximate vowels and consonants are suggested)
   b. Discuss the role this song might play in a market situation.
      i. Discuss what differences there might be between our grocery store and their market
   c. Explain meaning of the words in the song.
   d. Have the students sing the chorus on ‘la’ while tapping the quarter note pulse.
   e. Distribute the parts.
      i. Play the arrangement

**Assessment:** Students will play the piece while teacher conducts. The percussionists will be able keep the rhythm going, possibly while singing the chorus on ‘la.’

2. **Community Music Activity: Inuit Drum Circle**
   a. Form a circle (either one single-file or multiple concentric ones, depending on the space available) with the drummers.
   b. Pass out a drum (as specified) and a beater to each player.
      i. Show them how to hold both and how to strike it correctly
         1. Correct Inuit beating style is as follow: strike on the back edge of the frame, not the head itself
   2. In this way a characteristic sound is created and it will
allow for more textural differences within the ensemble

ii. Begin beating a steady tempo and have the group join in

c. Once a steady tempo has been established, add/subtract/divide the ensemble into various responsibilities.

i. The ensemble piece will be created by splitting the whole group into many sub-groups, and then assigning each sub-group with a special interlocking rhythm or phrase

ii. These new parts can be played on any part of the drum, at any subdivision of the beat, and at any dynamic

d. Once sub-groups are all playing their respective roles, feel free to have the ‘parts’ shift from group to group.

i. Having each group switch to their adjoining group’s pattern works well because it forces them to listen both to their own rhythm and the rhythm of the next group over

ii. Take liberties with how divided the ensemble becomes, how long the rhythm phrases are, and at what dynamics and tempo they are played

iii. Feel free to allow one or two individuals to improvise over the foundational ‘groove’ created by the ensemble

iv. Call and response sessions within the piece can also serve as a structural addition

e. Have the whole group break into slightly smaller sub-groups and come up with their own ensemble piece.

i. Allow them to incorporate all the activities of the first piece, as well as any new ideas they might have

Assessment: Performers will be able to demonstrate one or both of the following: a large ensemble piece or a small ensemble piece while using Inuit-style drums and playing in an Inuit-fashion.