



# Smithsonian Folkways

## **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

Noonwook from *Eskimo Songs from Alaska*. Country of Origin: United States. Year of Release: 1966. Label/Archive: Folkways Records. Duration: 3:08. Track Catalog Number: FW04069\_102  
<http://www.folkways.si.edu/nathan-noonwook/how-much-will-i-get-for-the-ivory-carving/american-indian/music/track/smithsonian>

- 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.