

# Amazing

A painting by Mabel Nigiyok



# Ulukaktok: A Vibrant Northern Community

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Ulukaktok, or Holman, is home to about 460 Ulukhatokmiut people. It is on an island located on the northwest side of Victoria Island in the Northwest Territories.

## Fall and Winter: A Time of Darkness, A Time of Community

In October, lakes freeze over and ice fishing begins. Every October 15, the community travels 80 kilometres to Fish Lake. Here, the people set fishing nets under the ice to catch fish for the winter.

When the snow is thick enough, dog sledding and snowmobiling start. From December to April, snow is packed down over the land, and thick, dark ice overlays the lakes. Iglus are built as cultural camps for eco-tourists, many of whom visit to see polar bears and musk oxen. Some also come to view the Northern Lights and enjoy dog sled or snowmobile tours.

## Spring and Summer: A Time of Light, A Time of Celebration

In April and May, ice fishing continues. When the ice melts, fishing for Arctic char takes place along the shoreline. In June, the King Eider Duck Migration brings thousands of birds to the community. The Kinglik Jamboree also takes place in June. At this festival, the community celebrates its culture with traditional events such as tea boiling, seal skinning, and duck plucking. Long summer evenings are celebrated in July with a golf tournament. Golfers carry mats to put their ball down on rather than hitting off the tundra.

## The Community Collects

Community dances are important to the people. Traditional dancers, dressed in thick fur clothing, dance to the beat of flat caribou skin drums the size of hula-hoops. The Ulukaktok Dancers and Drummers perform across Canada.

Local Inuit artists work at a community workshop where they produce prints, stone sculptures, horn carvings, or embroidered wool dolls. This local art is world famous and identified by the design of an *ulu*, a slate half-moon-shaped knife, and the name “Holman.”

## Activities

1. Locate Victoria Island and Holman/Ulukaktok on a map. What is unusual about the location of Victoria Island?
2. Fold a large sheet of paper into quarters, then thirds. Use the 12 sections to make an illustrated activity calendar of a year in Ulukaktok.
3. Much of Inuit art shows the quality of life of the people or relationship between animals and humans. Often the art illustrates transformations, or changes. The painting on this card was created by artist Mabel Nigiyok. Why is it called “Amazing”? Explain what you find “amazing” in this picture.
4. Design a tourist brochure to attract eco-tourists to Ulukaktok.