

AnthroBytes

Anthropology Research Highlights

#7 Changing Inuit Lifeways in the Central Canadian Arctic

Since 1992 Dr. Peter Collings has conducted ethnographic studies of the Inuit of the Central Canadian Arctic. The Inuit are typically thought to exemplify foraging (hunting and gathering) societies, but their traditional lifeways have undergone substantial change following contact with the West.



Dr. Peter Collings (R) with Donald Notaina at Kijavik, July 2004

Dr. Collings's research is based in Ulukhaktok (formerly Holman), a community of Copper Inuit whose ancestors occupied Western Victoria Island. Although Ulukhaktok was founded in the late 1930s, Inuit began to take up permanent residence in the community only during the early 1960s when the Canadian Government started providing public housing and other social services to Inuit in the region.

Dr. Collings focuses on the impacts of technological and social change to the cohort of Inuit men born after 1958 who were raised within the context of settlement life, rather than the traditional hunting camps.

In 2007 Collings and George Wenzel (McGill University) will begin a three-year project, sponsored by the National Science Foundation's Office of Polar Programs, to compare economic changes in the post-1958 birth cohort between Ulukhaktok and Clyde River, an Inuit community on Baffin Island in the Eastern Arctic.

Their research will examine the interaction of various factors that determine whether these men tend to participate in traditional foraging practices or find work as non-traditional wage laborers.