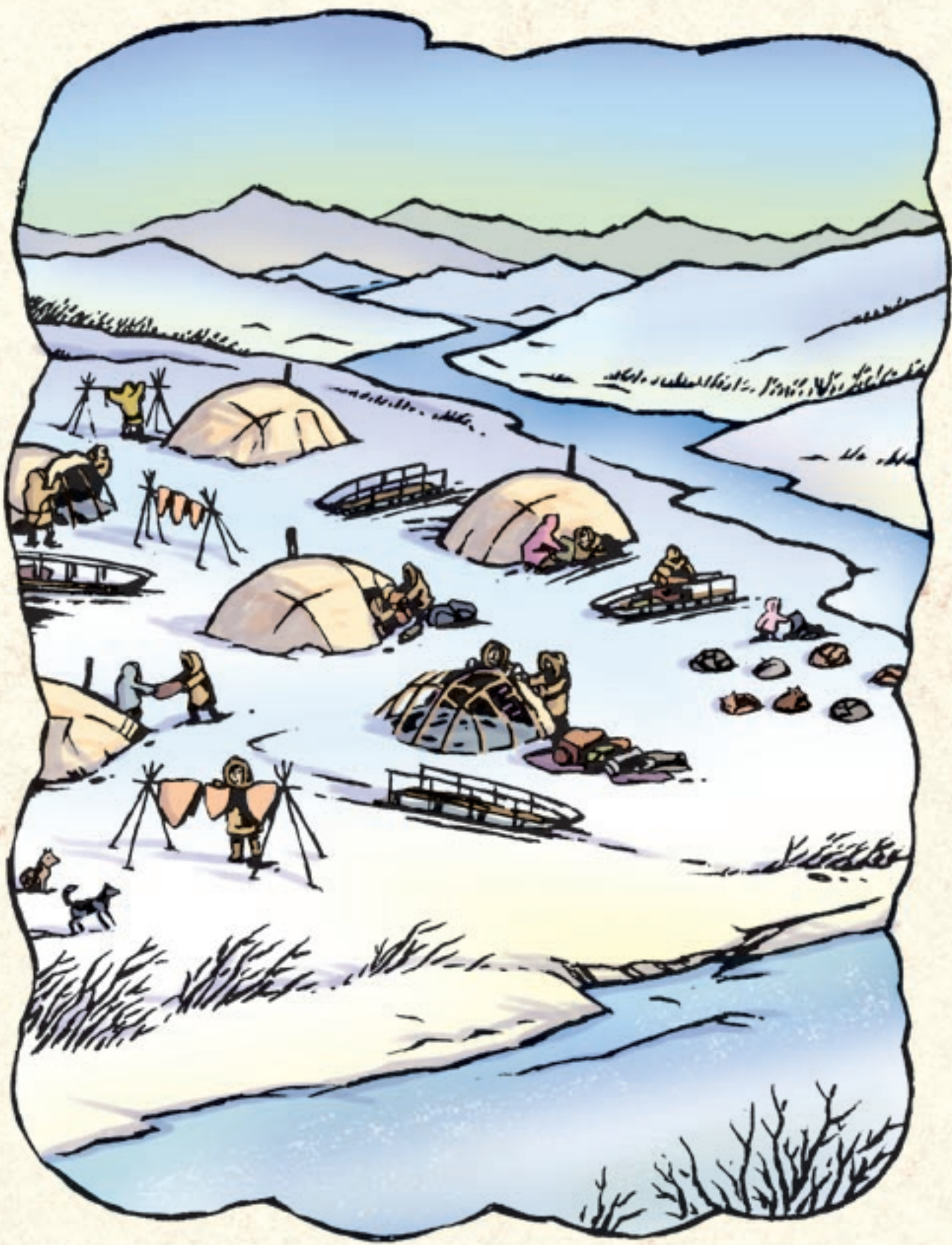


ADVENTURES - *in* - TRADING



By Patricia H. Partnow · Illustrated by Dan Miller



PART 1

ITAAĽĽUK GOES TO NIGLIO

It is springtime.

The year is 1900, though the Nunamiut family of young Itaattuk does not use calendars.

The family breaks camp for their trip north from the Brooks Range to the Arctic coast. They're going to the Nigliq trade fair held every year at the mouth of the Colville River.



They travel for days down frozen rivers.



When the geese start flying overhead and the ptarmigan start turning brown, they know the ice will soon break up on the river.



*They hurry to their boat cache camp - Uqsrukuvik -
where they have stored their umiaq frames all winter.*

Here they will wait for the river ice to melt.



They lash the skin covers onto their umiaqs...



*and sew new
clothes.*



They practice dancing...



*and they fish for grayling
through the ice.*



Finally! The ice is out! They float down the river to the coast...



Itaattuk's Nunamiut family arrives early with the first group of inlanders. They quickly unload their boats and pitch their tents.

They wait for their trading partners...

the Tagiugmiut and Kivaliñaat from the west.

There might also be some Itqilich from south of the Brooks Range.

And Inuit from the east, beyond the Mackenzie River in Canada.

They haven't seen their partners for a whole year! When they arrive, Itaattuk's family helps them unload their boats.

*The people gather to celebrate day and night.
The sun never goes down, and the people only stop
feasting and dancing when they're too tired to move.*



*Itaattuk's family gets up the next day after a good sleep.
His uncle Paamiu is anxious to start trading.*



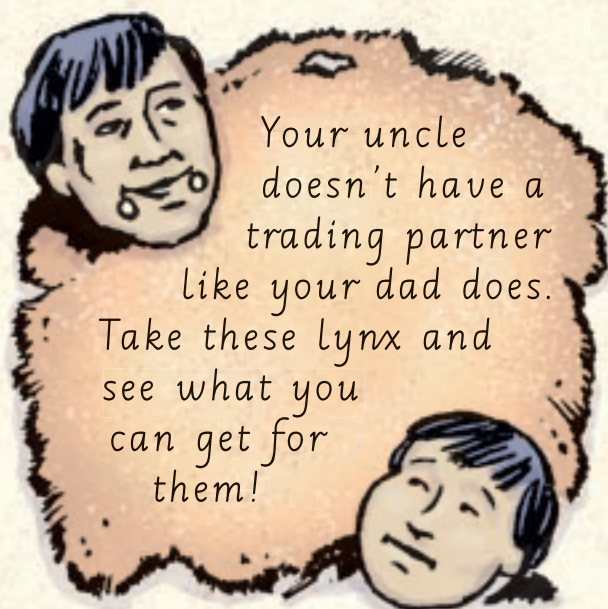
And the men have also hunted caribou,



*The women have scraped the furs.
They have made fine sinew
thread from the tendons.*



Your uncle
doesn't have a
trading partner
like your dad does.
Take these lynx and
see what you
can get for
them!

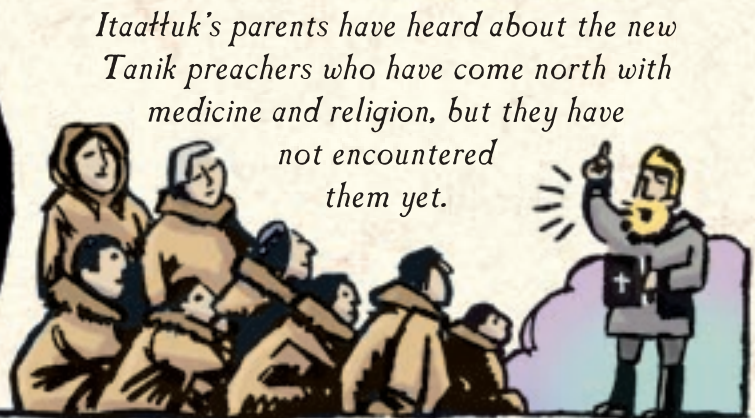
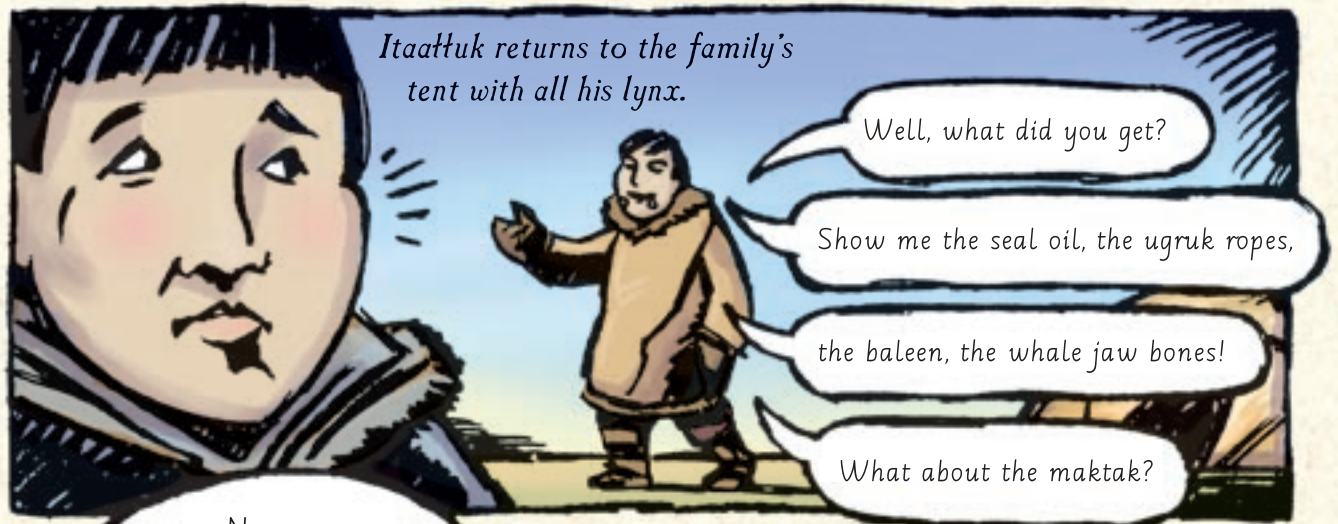




As Itaattuk sadly walks away, the coastal trader calls out to him:

You know, it's Sunday! You shouldn't trade on a Sunday. The preachers tell us this is the day we devote to God, not trade.







Today, the Tagiugmiut *ARE* willing to trade those things that Itaattuk's family needs to survive.



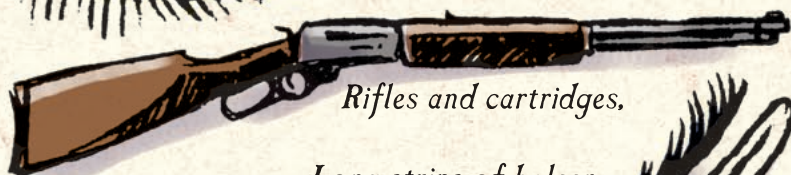
Maktak and rope made of walrus or sealskin



Waterproof boots of sealskin



Walrus ivory for making fishing lures and other tools.



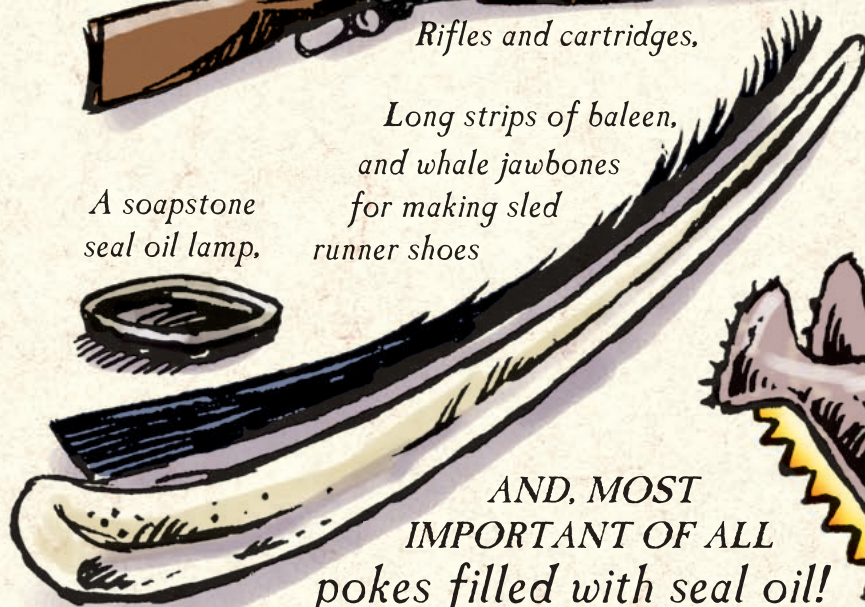
Rifles and cartridges.

Long strips of baleen, and whale jawbones for making sled runner shoes

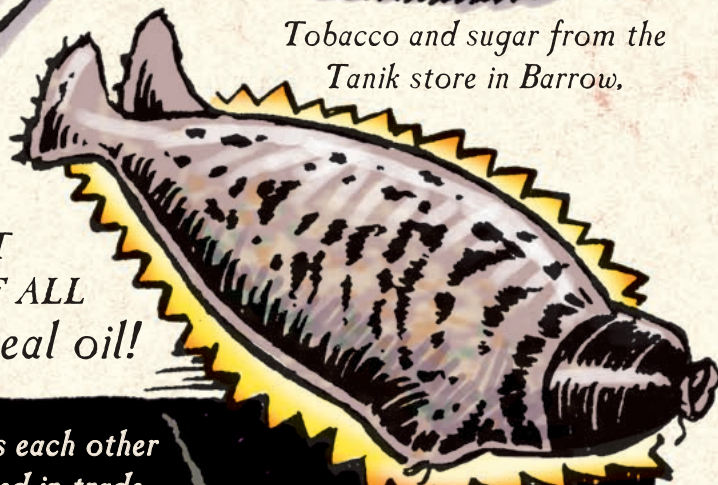
A soapstone seal oil lamp.



Tobacco and sugar from the Tanik store in Barrow.



AND, MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL pokes filled with seal oil!



That night the family shows each other all the goods they've received in trade.



The next day, Itaattuk's Nunamiut family talks with coastal Tagiugmiut who have become Christians.



Soon Itaattuk understands why their coastal trading partners would not trade on Sundays.

PART 2

EVERYTHING HAS A STORY

Ataata, how did the
Tagiugmiut get all
these things?

Everything
has a story.

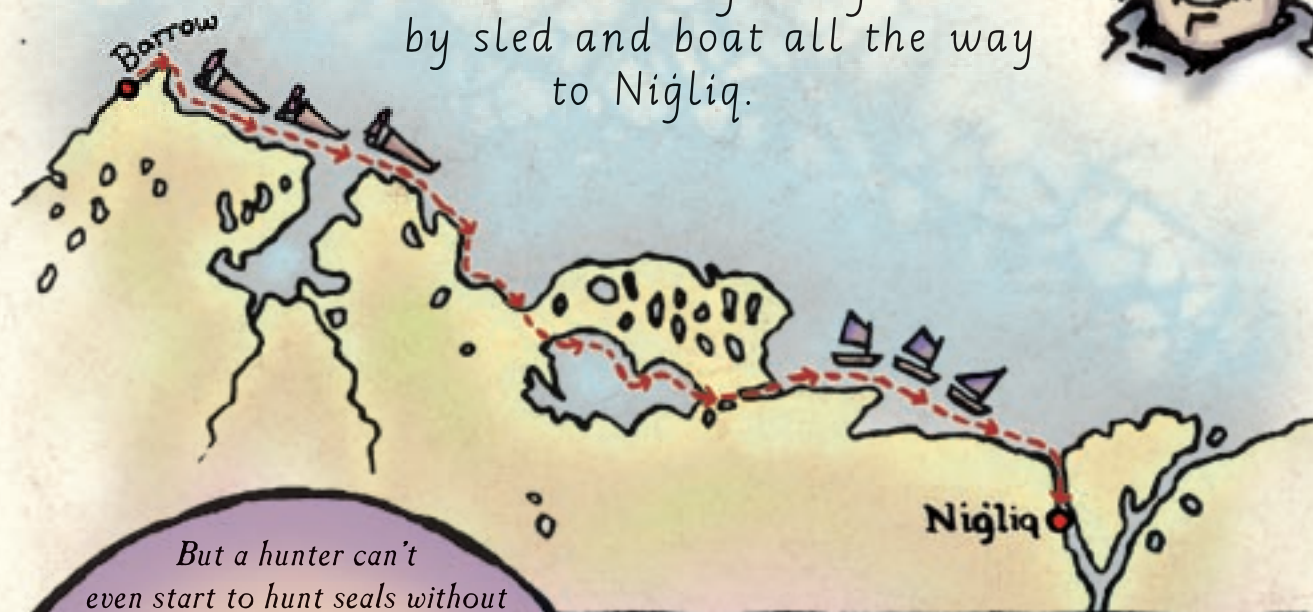


You know, Itaattuk, this poke
filled with seal oil began with us.
If we hadn't hunted for caribou
and wolverine, we might
never have gotten
this seal oil.

But Ataata,
we don't hunt
seals. How do
caribou and
wolverine
turn into
seal oil?



You know that your relatives from way north go out on the sea ice every spring to hunt seals. Then they bring them by sled and boat all the way to Nigliq.



But a hunter can't even start to hunt seals without good clothes.

And his wife can't make good clothes unless she has the right furs. She'll need ugruk and polar bear from the coast...

and caribou and wolverine from the land.



And where do
you think her
husband got the
caribou and
wolverine for
their clothes?



Right here at the
Nigliq trade fair—
from us!

*Besides clothes, before the hunter
even thinks about going out on the
sea ice, he has to make sure his
hunting gear is ready.*



And he has to train his dogs.

While the hunter has been getting ready, the natchiq has been living in the ocean, keeping away from polar bears.

Those seals can stay under the ice for a long time, but they need to come up for air every now and then. They scratch holes in the under side of the ice so they can get air.



Every time the seal breathes, the water vapor in his breath freezes. This forms a cone of ice over the hole.

The hunter looks for these cones.



His dog sniffs out the breathing holes. Then the hunter jabs his ice pick through the cone to be sure it's still open.

If the hole is open, he probes its shape so he can take proper aim when the seal returns.

If a hole is frozen over, the seal has stopped using it.





Then the hard part starts. The man has to stand over the hole he has chosen until a seal comes to it.

Sometimes he might have to stand there all day. He can't move, or the seal will see his shadow and be suspicious. It will stay away from that hole.

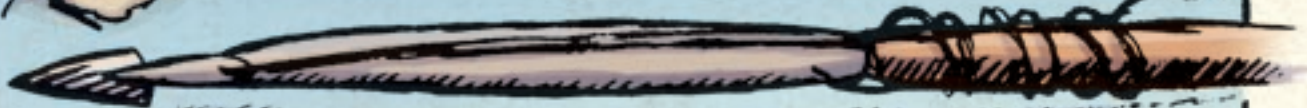
The hunter must be ready to harpoon the seal as soon as it comes.

When his quarry appears...

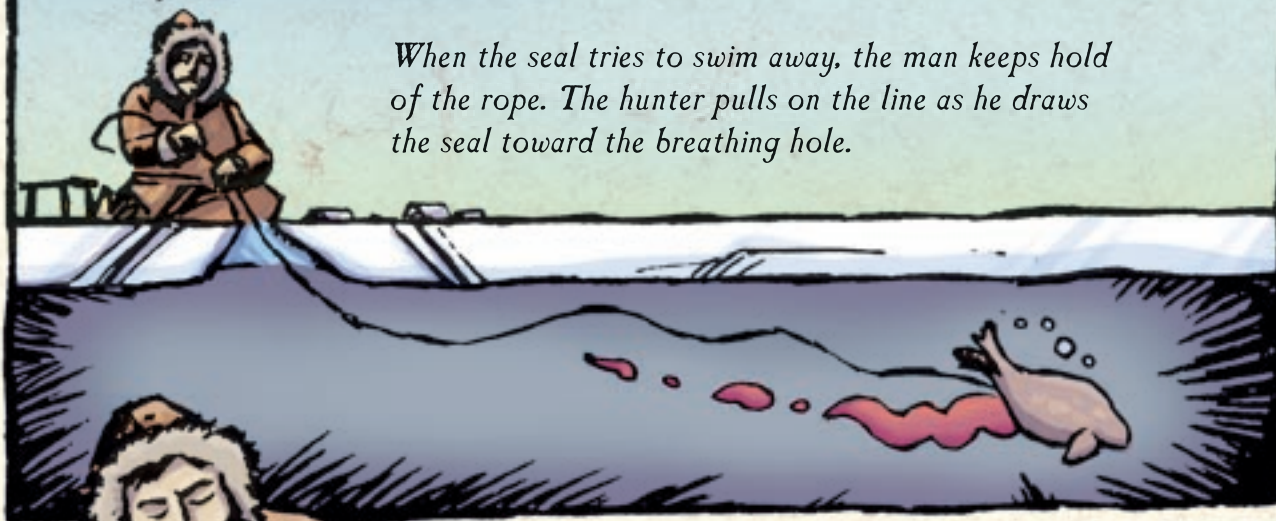




You've seen those spear heads the Tagiugmiut use. They come off the shaft when the seal is speared. They're attached to an ugruk rope.



When the seal tries to swim away, the man keeps hold of the rope. The hunter pulls on the line as he draws the seal toward the breathing hole.



Then
he pulls
the seal
through.



The hunter's work is done, but his wife's is just beginning...

*She gives the seal a drink
of fresh water so its
spirit won't go thirsty.*



*Then she has to remove
all the meat and bones
without cutting the skin.*



*She has to turn the skin
inside out and cut off
the blubber with
an ulu.*



*Then she takes all the blubber
and cuts it into strips.*



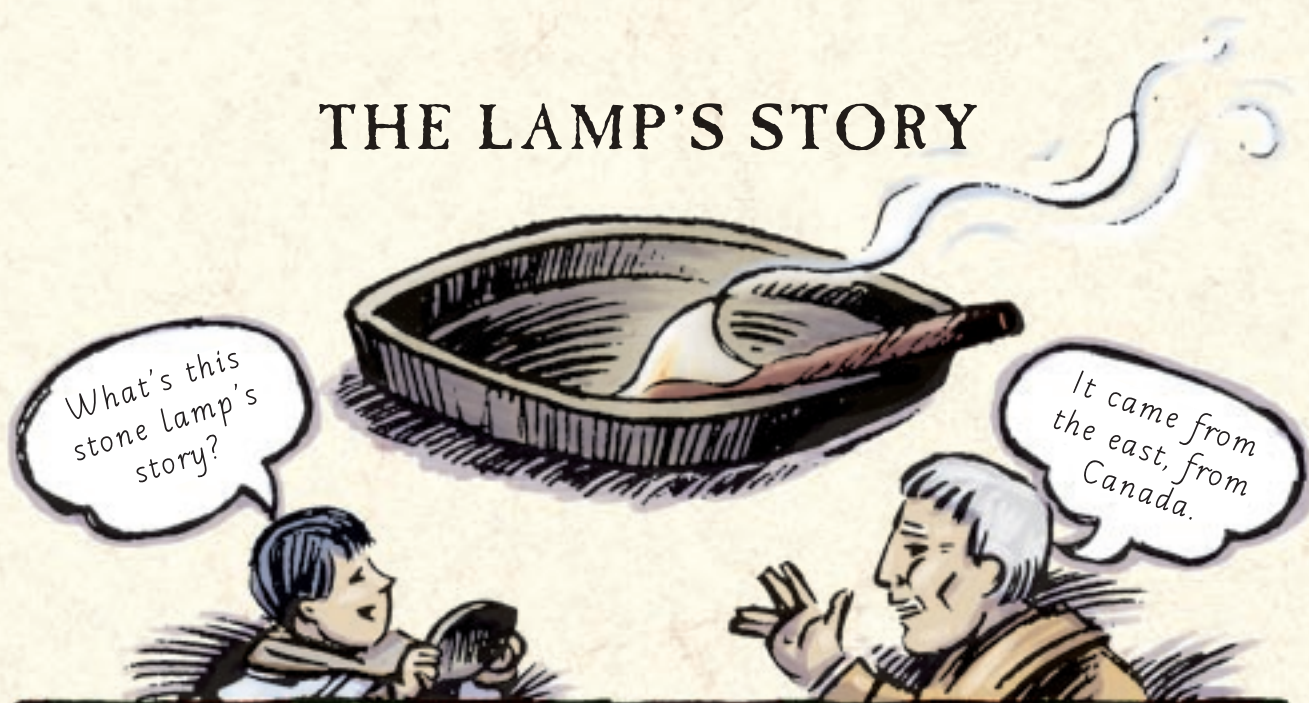
*She stuffs the
blubber into the
poke where it will
render into oil.*

So every time
we trade some furs to
the Tagiugmiut we're
helping them get more
seal oil for us.

Seal oil is our life!



THE LAMP'S STORY





A Copper Inuk chisels out a lump of soapstone from a big quarry.

He then shapes a lamp from the soapstone.



He travels with his dog team over the ice, so he can trade...



with his Inuk partner on the Mackenzie River...



who goes by boat to Brownlow Point...



to trade with Tagiugmiut...

who trades it for a wolverine skin...



from Itaattuk right here at Nigliq!

THE STORY OF THE TOBACCO



I don't think
the Iñuit made
this tobacco!



No, it comes from far away,
way down south. The whalers
brought it and traded it to the
Tagiugmiut. But I don't
know where it came from.



*Ataata was right.
The tobacco came from far away....*



HARVESTING TOBACCO IN VIRGINIA



In New Bedford, tobacco is loaded onto a whaling ship destined for Barrow.

In fair weather, the voyage from New Bedford would take 8-10 months.

Tobacco Twist

PART 3

GOING HOME

Back at Nigliq, people are breaking camp, loading their umiaqs with seal oil and other trade goods.



The family heads upriver, back to their boat cache camp, where they'll await freeze-up.



Then they'll load the sleds and return to their hunting grounds in the Brooks Range.



There they will renew the cycle of survival, hunting and preparing for the next year's trip to Nigliq.





EPILOGUE

Itaattuk and his family could not know that there would not be many more trade fairs at Nigliq. In fact, the last trade fair anywhere in Arctic Alaska was held in 1920.

In 1900, when our story takes place, many Taġiugmiut were already trading at commercial posts run by whalers and others from outside of Alaska. The posts carried goods such as metal tools and pots, rifles, cloth, tea, flour, and sugar. These items made life easier, but also changed many traditional activities.

Meanwhile, in the Interior, the Nunamiut were dealing with two big threats: fewer caribou in the region, and new diseases brought by foreign whalers and traders. People began to die from starvation, the measles or the flu. Many moved to the coast where they could find food more easily. They still trapped for lynx, fox, wolverine, and wolf, but they took the pelts to the trading posts instead of waiting for the annual fair. By the 1920s, trade fairs had become a thing of the past.

Nowadays the Messenger Feast, or Kivġiq, draws people from all over Iñupiaq country. Unlike long ago, when people traveled by foot and boat to Nigliq, today they fly or drive their snow machines to Barrow. People from across Alaska's North Slope come to celebrate with games, dancing, contests, and gift exchanges in the tradition of the trade fair. The spirit remains strong!