

Nunamiut, the Tundra Dwellers *Nunamiut*, les habitants de la toundra

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Article abstract

This article investigates the various senses and derivations of the term *nuna* in the Inuit-Yupik languages in order to reveal its origin in referring to the Arctic tundra. These languages arguably derive from that of the ancestors of the earliest inhabitants of the North American tundra, other inhabitants of the circumpolar Arctic today having only moved up at later times. Likely etymological correspondences in Eurasian languages of the far north support the original meaning of the word, whose connotations can be contrasted with those of English *land*, by which it is usually translated. They include reference to the unique vegetation of the Arctic tundra and to settlement and migratory movements across it in the past. The word has survived through millennia as far apart as mountainous East Greenland and the Aleutian Islands chain, where it has been adapted (as Unangan tanaX) to the archipelagic setting. It is suggested that the term *nunamiut*, literally “tundra dwellers,” can suitably be applied to speakers of all these languages still today.

Nunamiut, the Tundra Dwellers

Michael David Fortescueⁱ

ABSTRACT

This article investigates the various senses and derivations of the term *nuna* in the Inuit-Yupik languages in order to reveal its origin in referring to the Arctic tundra. These languages arguably derive from that of the ancestors of the earliest inhabitants of the North American tundra, other inhabitants of the circumpolar Arctic today having only moved up at later times. Likely etymological correspondences in Eurasian languages of the far north support the original meaning of the word, whose connotations can be contrasted with those of English *land*, by which it is usually translated. They include reference to the unique vegetation of the Arctic tundra and to settlement and migratory movements across it in the past. The word has survived through millennia as far apart as mountainous East Greenland and the Aleutian Islands chain, where it has been adapted (as Unangan tanaX) to the archipelagic setting. It is suggested that the term *nunamiut*, literally “tundra dwellers,” can suitably be applied to speakers of all these languages still today.

KEYWORDS

Land, *nuna*, tundra, Eskaleut languages, Nunavut, etymology

RÉSUMÉ

Nunamiut, les habitants de la toundra

Les sens et dérivations diverses du terme *nuna* dans les langues Inuit et Yupik sont le sujet de cette enquête qui montre que *nuna* renvoie originalement à la toundra arctique. Ces langues proviennent de celle des ancêtres des habitants plus anciens de la toundra nord-américaine. Les autres habitants de l'Arctique circumpolaire aujourd'hui n'y sont arrivés que plus tard. Des correspondances étymologiques probables dans les langues autochtones du Nord-urasiatique apportent leur soutien au sens original, dont les connotations contrastent avec celles du mot *land* en anglais, par lequel on traduit habituellement *nuna*. Celles-ci comprennent une référence à la végétation unique de la toundra arctique ainsi qu'à l'habitation et aux mouvements migratoires à travers elle dans le passé. Le mot a survécu pendant des milliers d'années entre des régions si éloignées que les montagnes du Groenland oriental et les îles aléoutiennes, où il s'est adapté (comme Unangan tanaX) à l'environnement d'archipel. L'article suggère que le terme *nunamiut*, littéralement « les habitants de la toundra » peut s'appliquer convenablement à ceux qui parlent toujours ces langues-là aujourd'hui.

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MOTS-CLÉS

Territoire, *nuna*, tundra, langues eskaléoutes, Nunavut, étymologie

ABBREVIATIONS

AAV	Alutiiq Alaskan Yupik
Al.	Aleut
Car.	Caribou (WCI)
CAY	Central Alaskan Yupik
CED	Comparative Eskimo Dictionary (Fortescue et al. 2010)
CSY	Central Siberian Yupik
ECI	Eastern Canadian Inuit
EG	East Greenlandic
FU	Finno-Ugric
GRI	Greenlandic
HBC	Hooper Bay-Chevak (CAY)
NAI	North Alaskan Inuit
NG	North Greenlandic (Polar Eskimo)
NSK	Norton Sound Kotlik (CAY)
NSY	Naukan Siberian Yupik
PE	Proto-Eskimo
PI	Proto-Inuit
PUS	Proto-Uralo-Siberian
PY	Proto-Yupik
Sir.	Sireniksi
SPI	Seward Peninsula Inuit
WCI	Western Canadian Inuit
WG	West Greenlandic

A cardinal concept in the Inuit and Yupik worlds is that of *nuna* (also Aleut *tana-X*), roughly translatable as ‘land.’ The term has been central in recent debates around Inuit land claims and is known to the wider world through the new Canadian administrative terms of Nunavut (‘our land’) and Nunavik (‘big land’), as well as in the official name of Greenland, Kalaallit Nunaat (‘land of the Kalaallit’).¹ Inuit Nunangat refers to the land of the Canadian Inuit as a whole. But does *nuna* really correspond directly

1. Nunavut is Canada’s most northern and newest territory, officially separated from the Northwest Territories in 1999. The majority of its population is Inuit. Nunavik refers to the northernmost part of the Province of Quebec, inhabited by the Inuit, for which a similar degree of autonomy is sought. Nunatsiavut is the term used for the northern part of Labrador inhabited by Inuit. See Dahl et al. (2000) for extensive discussions concerning the recognition and definition of Nunavut. Greenland has had a degree of home rule autonomy within the Danish Kingdom since 1979, with additional provisions for self-government in 2009.

to English *land*? In discussing the etymology of words for Land and Earth in European languages, Buck distinguishes five main senses (often overlapping and extended differently in different languages): (a) the whole earth (a newer sense, overlapping with ‘world’); (b) the solid surface of the earth (ground, the source of vegetation); (c) the solid surface of the earth vs. the sea; (d) soil; and (e) a definite portion of the earth’s surface, from the land of an individual to a whole country (Buck 1949/1988, 15–17). In Germanic languages the starting point of ‘land’ was sense (e), later extended to (c), replacing ‘earth,’ although in English ‘land’ is largely displaced in meaning by ‘country’ when referring to a supra-individual or national entity in sense (e). It has also developed a sense of ‘countryside’ as opposed to the town or city—compare Greenlandic *nunaannarmi* below. So, what is the core meaning, the original starting point for Eskaleut *nuna*? As I shall demonstrate, it is the geographical concept of ‘tundra,’ a meaning still reflected in cognates in distantly related languages of the Eurasian Arctic.²

A rich source for the different senses and extensions of the term across the spectrum of Eskaleut languages and dialects is the *Comparative Eskimo Dictionary* (CED) of Fortescue et al. (1994, 2010), though the definitions given are by necessity simplified and selective compared to actual usage. Further details can be gleaned from dictionaries for the individual languages, and indeed from the wider literature around the land claim debates. My treatment here is purely linguistic, however. The gloss given for the Proto-Eskimo (PE) head entry *nuna* in the CED is simply ‘land,’ and this is repeated as below (slightly adjusted) for the individual languages/dialects (see the list of abbreviations at the beginning of this paper):

- PE *nuna* ‘land’ [cf. Aleut *tana-X* ‘land, island, space, place, earth, ground, settlement, country’³]
- AAY *nuna* ‘land, place, village, earth, country’
- CAY *nuna* ‘land, place, ground, the earth, animal’s habitat, village, country’ [older Nunivak form *luna*]
- NSY *nuna* ‘land’
- CSY *nuna* ‘land’ [also ‘floor,’ and note *suna* ‘soil’⁴]

-
2. The unrelated term ‘tundra’ itself comes via Russian from Kildin Saami *tundra* ‘uplands,’ related to Finnish *tunturi* ‘treeless hill.’ It is defined in the *Collins English Dictionary* (1985 edition) as ‘a vast treeless zone lying between the ice cap and the timber line of North America and Eurasia having a permanently frozen subsoil.’ See the map at the end of this paper for its extent.
 3. Note that initial */n/ becomes /t/ in Aleut, and assimilation has changed the first vowel from /u/ to /a/. The final -X is that of the PE ‘absolute singular’ suffix ‘*-R’, which has spread to vowel-final stems in Aleut.
 4. Perhaps unrelated. Most languages have reflexes of PE *nəvðuR* ‘(lump of) soil, sod’ in a similar sense (also CSY), probably related to *n’əvə- ‘0cling to’ (HBC *ləvə*).

Sir. [*nuna* not found—see below for *asa* and *əna*]
 NAI *nuna* ‘land, earth, inland’
 WCI *nuna* ‘land’
 ECI *nuna* ‘land’⁵
 GRI *nuna* ‘land, earth, dwelling place, native country’

Below this entry appears a number of derived forms, as simplified below with some variant reflexes and etymological explanations added:

PE *nunivay* ‘tundra’ [from *nuna* plus *-vay* ‘real,’ reformulated in most dialects as if with *-vay* ‘big’; CAY *nunapik* ‘tundra’ (HBC ‘mound on tundra’); CSY *nunivak* ‘tundra, roseroot,’ *nunavi-* ‘gather greens’; NSY *nunivak* ‘roseroot, vegetation’; NAI *nunavik* ‘rolling tundra’; WCI Sigliq *nunavaaq* ‘mainland’; ECI *nunivak-* ‘pick berries, collect clams’ (and note Nunavik mentioned above); GRI *nunavik* ‘dry land, continent,’ *nuniay-* ‘pluck berries’; NG *nunivaaq* ‘leaf of willow shrub’]

PE *nunalit-* ‘land’ [with affix *-lit-* ‘come across, reach’; ECI *nunalit-* ‘go inland’; WG ‘come into harbour, come to Greenland by sea’ but also *nunniC-* ‘land, arrive in country’; ECI *nunalitsa(k)-* ‘prowl around human dwellings (wild animals)’; CAY *nunalitə-/nunitə-* ‘run aground’; Al. *tanali-* ‘go to such and such a land,’ *tanalit-* ‘run aground’]

PE *nunni-* ‘settle’ [with affix *-li-* ‘make’]

PE *nunanniR-* ‘be enjoyable’ [with *-n(n)iR-* ‘be good to do’; GRI *nuanniR-* ‘be enjoyable’; ECI has much distorted *aanau-* ‘be beautiful’; NG *nannaat* ‘that’s great!’; PY has *nunaki-* ‘enjoy oneself’ as well as *nunaniR-* ‘be fun’ (in NSY ‘be interesting’)]

PE *nunavay* ‘walrus on ice’ [with *-vay* ‘big’]

PY *nunajitə-* ‘be restless’ [with negative affix *-jit-*; CSY ‘not have enough room’]

PY *nunatə-* ‘visit another settlement’ [with *-tə-* ‘get, catch, go to’; NSY *nunataq* ‘visitor from another village’]

PI *nunat-* ‘cache’ [with causative *-t-* if not the same as *nunatə-* above; WCI Sigliq *nuat-* ‘accumulate, heap up’; Al. *tanat-* ‘bury, put underground’]

PI *nunatqan* ‘fellow countryman, s.o. living in same place as one’ [with *-qan/-nqan* ‘companion at doing’; PY has *nunalgun* with *-lyun* in the same sense]

PI *nunaRžak* ‘seal’s den under ice’ [with uncertain affix; WG *nunaRsaq*, ECI *nunaRyaq*]

5. And in Schneider (1985), ‘the earth, the sun and everything which grows on earth, country that is inhabited, vegetation.’

Further related forms in individual dialects can be cited, taken here from various lexical sources and adjusted to the phonemicization of the CED (Berthelsen et al. 1997 and Schultz-Lorentzen 1927 for WG; Robbe and Dorais 1986 for EG; Fortescue 1991 for NG; Schneider 1985 for ECI; Maclean 1980 for NAI; Jacobson 1984 for CAY; Badten et al. 2008 for CSY; Menovščikov 1964 for Sirenikski; and Bergsland 1994 for Aleut). Some of these will be discussed in more detail below. Thus:

GRI *nunaannaRmi* ‘in the country(side),’ *nunasiaq* ‘colony,’ *nunap iluatiyuuR-* ‘sail inside skerries’ or ‘go down underground,’ *nunap timaa* ‘interior of the land,’ *nunaqaRfik* ‘settlement,’ *nunaqaR-* ‘lives (in a place),’ *nunaRsuaq* ‘the world,’ *nunasi-* ‘immigrate, sight land, buy a piece of land,’ *nunasunni* ‘a smell of earth,’ *nunat issittut* ‘Arctic, Arctic countries,’ *nunniuR-* ‘level the ground (for construction),’ *nunaRpasiC-* ‘wind comes from inland,’ *nunasaRniq* ‘foehn wind, from inland,’ *nunaaat* ‘cultivated soil,’ *nunaR-* ‘touches land (boat pulled up or down on shore),’ *nunataq* ‘nunatak,’ *nunayi-* ‘live there,’ EG *nunat* ‘Greenlandic dandelions (*taraxacum croceum*),’ *nunakkaatsiaq* ‘stone,’ NG *nunaRluit* ‘vegetation’

ECI *nunayaq* ‘the earth, vegetation,’ *nunaaRait* ‘small flowers,’ *nunaaR-* ‘go inland, disembark,’ *nunalik* ‘inhabitant,’ *nunaliiRi-* ‘cultivate the land,’ *nunannguaq* ‘map,’ *nunakkuuyuuq* ‘terrestrial vehicle,’ *nunat-* ‘go ashore (once),’ *nunatuR-* ‘eat vegetation,’ *nunaRyuaq* ‘the world,’ *nunamiut* ‘inhabitants of the world’ (see below for the latter)

WCI Car. *nunataq* ‘higher ground’

NAI *nunamiut* ‘inland Inuit,’ *nunaaqqiq* ‘village, town,’ *nunauraq* ‘map,’ *nunauruat* ‘a nation of people’

AAV *ninilkiR-* ‘play around’ [distorted cognate of PY *nunajitə-* above]

CAY *nunaRluk* ‘dirt on floor,’ *nunakəytə-* ‘arrange, make room for,’ *nunakuaRcuun* ‘car,’ *nunanguaq* ‘map,’ *nunaRpak*, ‘the world, city,’ *nunaun* ‘(land) property,’ *nuniuR-* ‘digin the earth,’ NSK *nunataR-* ‘pick berries,’ *Nunivaaq* ‘Nunivak island’

NSY *nunalək* ‘elder of village’

CSY *nunaRlak* ‘the world, continent, city,’ *nunaaq* ‘camp, village, city,’ *nunatu-* ‘be spacious,’ *nunawRuuR-* ‘go to a camp’

Aleut *tanaRi-* ‘live in a place, stay home, hunt on land,’ *tanaḍyusi-X* ‘settlement, village,’ *tanaxs-* ‘field, hunting and fishing area,’ *tanaRit-* ‘settle, take land,’ *tanaanu-* ‘go back to village in boat, approach land,’ *tanuli-* ‘remove (people) from their place,’ *tanatu-* ‘beroomy, spacious’

Now we can compare this array of meanings for *nuna* and its derivatives with those given by Buck for English ‘land.’ Thereafter we can relate the core meaning and its variations to the geographical and economic

settings of the different groups of Eskaleut speakers. Perusal of the forms given above suggest that Buck's senses (b) 'the solid surface of the earth (ground, the source of vegetation)' and (c) 'the solid surface of the earth vs. the sea' are the most relevant—the prevalence of derived terms involving the latter sense clearly indicates usage by predominantly coastal people. The sense (e) 'a definite portion of the earth's surface, from the land of an individual to a whole country' is certainly relevant, but in the whole country (or nation) sense it is a more recent development in colonial and postcolonial times. It can be assumed that knowledge of a distinct territory associated with one's own tribe or dialect has always been possible to describe as 'our *nuna*' or the like. Buck's 'whole earth' sense (a) is clearly assignable to modern times, presupposing knowledge of the unity of the planet as a whole, although the meaning 'all of the *known* world' could be much older. The 'soil' meaning (d) is naturally limited (though present), not surprisingly given the limited extent of cultivatable soil in the Arctic.⁶

But there are also nuances to the *nuna* concept that are not covered by Buck's five senses. For a start, there is the association with a particular kind of vegetation and activities associated with it—in particular berry picking on the tundra, a particularly pleasant occupation in summer months, presumably the source of the "enjoyable" derivations like PE *nunanniR*-above. Contrasting with this in an interesting way is PY *nunaŋitə*- 'be restless' or 'not have enough room,' literally 'to lack *nuna*'; it suggests being in some way confined from or prevented from going out onto the wider tundra (to hunt or to pick berries?). The opposite is reflected in CSY *nunatu*-, Aleut *tanatu*- 'be roomy, spacious' (with affix *-tu*- 'have a large'). Then there are the important 'village, settlement' meanings not covered by 'land'; I shall return to these below. Other developments, like the extension to terms for 'walrus on ice' and 'seal's den under the ice,' are very specific to the Arctic environment.

But perhaps the most telling clue as to the core meaning is provided by the derived PE form *nunivay/nunaviy* 'tundra,' i.e., 'real *nuna*,' which must be very old given both the transparent meaning and the irregular variations in form in the individual languages concerned. All the other meanings can be seen to be extended from *nuna* in this sense rather than from (e), the individual territory sense from which the corresponding terms in Germanic languages developed, according to Buck. The core meaning could reasonably have referred originally to the whole of the Arctic tundra that the nomadic ancestors of the Inuit and Yupiit travelled through and eventually settled in. The parcelling up into distinct tribal territories (however

6. But note PI *nunat*- 'cache' given above, which implies burying in the earth (as the Aleut shows), although it can also mean just heaping up and covering in stones where the possibility of digging down is limited.

large or small) presupposes an end to the nomadic phase and the beginning of a sedentary—at least a seasonally sedentary—one. The tundra of Eurasia and North America is, of course, confined by its proximity to the Arctic coasts, so ‘coming to land from the sea’ and ‘coming to the tundra’ would be virtually synonymous, although extensions could specify going further into the tundra from the coast.

Corroborating the core ‘tundra’ sense of *nuna* is a group of derivatives focusing on the typical edible vegetation on the tundra, berries and roots. Thus WG *nuniay-* ‘pluck berries,’ which appears to be a direct verbalization of PE *nunivay/nunaviy*, as also in ECI *nunivak-* ‘pick berries’ (extended also to ‘collect clams,’ another ‘food of the land’). ECI further has *nunatuR-* ‘eat vegetation’ (with *-tuR-* ‘consume’) and *nunayaq* ‘the earth, vegetation’ (probably with *-yaq* ‘piece of’). CAY (NSK dialect) has *nunataR-* ‘pick berries,’ while other CAY dialects have *unataR-*, suggesting contamination with *una-* ‘work with the hands,’ and CSY has *nunivi-* from *nunivay* plus *-(l)i-* ‘make,’ which in Aleut can also mean ‘gather’ and ‘go to.’ EG has the interesting form *nunat* ‘Greenlandic dandelions’ (the plural form of *nuna*)—compare ECI *nunaaRait* ‘small flowers’ (with *-aRaq* ‘small’). NG has *nunivaaq* ‘Arctic willow leaf’ and *nunaRluit* ‘vegetation,’ apparently with *-(R)luk* ‘bad’ (compare CAY *nunaRluk* ‘dirt on floor’), and, finally, WG has *nunasunni* ‘the smell of earth’ (surely the subtle smell of the tundra).

There are plausible etymological links between *nuna* and cognates in other Siberian languages that further corroborate this claim. As I propose in Fortescue and Vajda (forthcoming), in which the hypothesis of a distant genetic relationship between the circumpolar “Uralo-Siberian” languages (Uralic, Yukaghir, and Eskaleut) is argued for, *nuna* appears to derive via an earlier form **n’ula* (with palatal /n/) from Proto-Uralo-Siberian **n’urV* (with uncertain final vowel) as in FU *n’urmi* ‘meadow’ (Sammallahti 1988) and Yukaghir *n’oro-* ‘moss, swamp’ (Nikolaeva 2006).⁷ Note that PUS */r/ corresponds to PE /l/. An example of a different cognate showing both correspondences can be seen in Finno-Ugric *n’arV/n’oriV* ‘skin without fur’ and Yukaghir *n’a.r* ‘bare patch on fur,’ going with PE *nalu(C)aR* ‘bleached sealskin’ (with a further suffix). The analysis above assumes nasal assimilation-at-a-distance. The older Nunivak form *luna* mentioned above would support this (with metathesis or simply sporadic initial /l/ < /n/ as in HBC *lavə-* from **n’əvə-* above). Terms meaning ‘swampy meadow’ within the circumpolar context could certainly refer to the same kind of treeless topography as *nuna*. Alone of the Eskaleut languages, Sirenikski (now extinct) lacked a cognate of *nuna*, which was covered instead by two other common stems, *asa* ‘ground, tundra, bottom of cliff’ (the last reflecting the

7. And Janhunen (1977) has PS *n’əjkə* ‘marsh, swamp’ (from **n’u-*). Compare modern Finnish *nurmi* ‘pasture, lawn,’ and Saami *njor’ma* ‘meadow.’

CSY meaning, from PY *aci* ‘area below,’ ultimately from PE *at-* ‘below’) and *ənə* ‘place, dwelling,’ *əna* ‘settlement’ (from PE *ənə* ‘place, house, home’—Aleut locative *na-ya-n* ‘in it’), both of which appear to have Siberian cognates.⁸ Sirenikski, note, probably represents the one recorded Eskimo language that never left the Asian side of Bering Strait.

The specialization of cognate *tana-X* in Aleut to refer principally (especially in the western dialects) to whole islands—hardly describable as ‘tundra’ despite the lack of trees—is quite natural, given the archipelagic setting of that language. But most of the basic meanings of PE *nuna* are to be found there, including *tanaRi-* ‘live in a place, stay home, hunt on land’ (with *-Ri-* ‘have as’),⁹ *tanasx-* ‘field, hunting and fishing area’ (with *-sx-* found in place names, probably going with PE *-ləy* ‘having’),¹⁰ *tanalRit-* ‘settle, take land’ (with *-IRi-t-* ‘get, provide with’), and *tanaanu-* ‘go back to village in boat, approach land’ (with *-Vnu-* ‘go towards’).

How would the extension between this hypothetical core sense of *nuna* and that of the individual settlement or village have developed? The sense of the individual tribal or dialect territory must be intermediate here, and with the concentration of single tribes in specific places for most of the year, these permanent settlements would have easily become associated with the whole territory as such. The process of concentration in settlements has, of course, continued apace into recent times. The path from ‘tundra’ to ‘the whole earth’ can also be plotted against the widening knowledge of the world brought in by missionaries and explorers, though as said, earlier concepts of the whole known world (essentially consisting of tundra and bordering mountains and sea) would no doubt have predated such contact, perhaps in the accounts of the spiritual travels of shamans. Terms such as Greenlandic *nunaRsuaq* ‘big *nuna*’ probably reflects this. Note also the CSY equivalent, *nunaRlak* ‘the world, continent, city’ (similarly CAY *nunaRpak*), indicative of a wide range of sizes covering both the ‘whole earth’ and the ‘individual settlement’ senses. At the other end of the scale is GRI *nunaqaRfik* ‘settlement, village’ (literally ‘place having its (own) *nuna*’), CSY ‘camp, village’ (but also ‘city’), and Aleut *tanaḍyusi-X* ‘settlement, village’ (with *-ḍyusi-X* ‘place of’). Note also PY *nunataḥ-* ‘visit another settlement.’ WG *nunasiaq* (literally ‘acquired *nuna*’) has today the specific sense—‘colony’—but earlier (in Schultz-Lorentzen 1927) had the broader sense ‘place where one has settled,’ based on the verbal form *nunasi-*, which

8. Note Proto-Uralic stem *al-* ‘below’ as regards the first, also perhaps Finno-Permic *ac’a* ‘meadow, valley.’ As regards *ənə/əna*, compare Nenets postpositional root *n’a-* ‘at,’ probably from PUS **ene/enä* ‘place (on).’

9. Compare WG *nunayi-* ‘live there’ (transitive), with a different affix.

10. Compare ECI *nunalik* ‘inhabitant,’ which can also mean ‘community, village’ (comment of reviewer), and NSY *nunalək* ‘elder of village.’

can mean ‘sight land,’ ‘buy a piece of land,’ as well as ‘immigrate to another land,’ displaying a wide range of senses of *nuna*. The modern, national sense of ‘land’ or ‘country’ is seen in WG *nunat issittut* ‘Arctic countries’ (literally ‘freezing cold *nunas*’). In contemporary ECI *nunaquti* (‘one’s belonging *nuna*’) is apparently used of legally owned property as opposed to the open tundra (reviewer’s comment).

To return for a moment to Sirenikski *asa* in the sense ‘ground, tundra,’ this is not only cognate with PY (and Aleut) *aci* ‘area below,’ but probably also with PI *aci* ‘somewhere vague or remote, out in the open, away from the settlement’ (as in *acivaq-* ‘go away from settlement’), which has further negative connotations such as *aciu-* ‘be useless or wasted,’ presumably from the ‘down’ sense. This suggests a shift in relationship to the tundra once permanent settlements were established. From this perspective, the tundra is now the wilderness for hunting and food gathering, but not a place to stay out in for long. Hence *asimiut* ‘inhabitants of small settlements’ in West Greenlandic, literally ‘remote area dwellers,’ as opposed to those who live in larger, permanent villages. The concept of the tundra has become ambivalent in its connotations, now referable to by two different stems.

Nuna is also ingredient in many topological/environmental terms specific to the Arctic—*nunataq* (with *-taq* ‘thing pertaining to’), referring to a rocky protrusion from the Inland Ice of Greenland, has, of course, entered the languages of the world. Compare Caribou WCI *nunataq* ‘higher ground,’ which suggests the original meaning of ‘tundra’ in Saami of treeless higher ground. Other terms in WG include *nunap timaa* ‘interior of land’ (literally ‘the *nuna*’s body or main part’), *nunasaRniq* ‘foehn wind, from inland’ (probably a nominalization with *-saR-* ‘fetch from’), and *nunap iluatiyuuR-* ‘sail inside skerries’ (literally ‘go by the *nuna*’s interior’). It is also widespread in place names like *Nunivaaq* (the large tundra-covered island in Alaska, Nunivak Island) and *Nunap isua* (Kap Farvel at the southernmost tip of Greenland, literally ‘*nuna*’s end’). EG *nunakkaatsiaq* ‘rock, stone’ (with affixes probably meaning ‘small’ and ‘medium-sized,’ respectively) reminds us that true tundra gives way in some parts of the inhabited Arctic to hard rock and ice. The relationship between maps and the land was well known to Inuit (cf. Spink and Moodie 1972), as still reflected in the words for ‘map’ in ECI *nunannguaq*, NAI *nunauraq*, and CAY *nunanuaq* (all with PE *-ŋ(ŋ) uðaR* ‘little, thing like a’). See Fortescue (1988) for reproduction of such a map for the Igloodik region by shaman Ewerat, drawn for Parry in 1824. The general correspondence of dialect region and specific tribal territory can be seen in terms of common local orientation terms and directions, as discussed in that work. It makes sense that basic directional terms should hold over such a larger region (the broader tribal *nuna*) for speakers of the same dialect/language in order to communicate about directions while travelling around within it, despite the same terms having a more coast-relative

orientation in the immediate environs of the settlement. Thus, in all of West Greenland *avani* refers to ‘in the north,’ whereas the *av-* directions varies locally according to the immediate orientation of the coast. The reverse holds for all of East Greenland, where the same stem refers to the south. And in Ewerat’s map for the Igloodik region *kanangnak* (the prevailing north or northeast wind term) is given as cardinal ‘north,’ although the direction *kan-* of the stem (‘down to the beach’) must change continually along the convoluted coastline.

Mention should be made here of another term referring to one’s surroundings, PE *avan/avatā* ‘area around,’ from demonstrative root *av-* ‘over there (extended)’—in CAY also ‘moving away from speaker’ or ‘that speaker moves away from’ (as also with Aleut cognate *aw(a)-*).¹¹ This is a rather vague, neutral expression, without the numerous connotations of *nuna*. It can refer to land or sea or just the immediate surrounds of the house. In CSY it is just ‘area on the other side’ of something, and in WG it generally means ‘off from land’ (and possessed form *avataa* ‘off from the coast’), just as *avalaC-* from the same root means ‘set off (to sea)’ or specifically ‘sail to Denmark from Greenland.’¹² There is a verbal derivation in PE *avatājiR-* ‘surround’ or ‘go around’ (with *-jiR-* ‘remove’). The root itself, PE *av-*, and the corresponding wind term *avannaq* has been specialized in West Greenland to the direction ‘north’ (‘south’ in East Greenland), i.e., ‘right along the coast looking out to sea.’ The coastal sense of the root (though no longer pointing north) can also be found in some Eastern Canadian Arctic dialects. Nowhere does it refer, like *nuna*, to the land one lives in.

For a native speaker’s perspective on *nuna* in a still broader sense, consider Jose Kusugak’s remarks on the relationship of Canadian Inuit to their Arctic homeland, here specifically referring to Nunavut, which covers several specific tribal regions (Dahl et al. 2000, 20):

In Inuktitut—the language of the Inuit—Nunavut is a composite word made up of the root word, “nuna” or “land,” and a suffix “vut” or “our.” Thus Nunavut means “our land” in English. The place of the term “Nunavut” in the everyday conversation of generations of Inuit has reflected ancient truths about Arctic demography and culture. The Inuit have been, and the Inuit remain, the aboriginal people of Nunavut. We have lived in the Arctic for many thousands of years. The Arctic has sustained and defined us. We are part of the Arctic landscape and seascape and the Arctic landscape and seascape are a part of us. A more subtle, but no less authentic, English interpretation of Nunavut is “Our Home,” not just “Our Land.”

11. And derivations *awaanu-* ‘go far away,’ *awaaRi-X* ‘other, stranger.’

12. Note also *avataaRsuaq* ‘universe,’ literally ‘big surroundings.’

As we have seen, the word *nuna* is truly pan-Eskaleut, covering all of the territory lived in by modern Inuit, Yupiit and Unangan (Aleuts). In this it is more inclusive than these specific ethnonyms themselves. Both *inuk* and *yupik* ('real *yuk*') are idiosyncratically from PE *iŋuɣ* or *iŋyuy* 'human being.'¹³ This, in turn, is probably cognate with Aleut *iŋ(i)yu-X* '(living) body,' as described in Fortescue et al. (2010, 150), where further examples of the irregular correspondence of */ŋ/ to /n/ in Inuit and /y/ in Yupik in this position are given. The ultimate source of *iŋuɣ*/*iŋyuy* may well be something like **wayŋ-yuy*, reflecting PUS **wayŋV-* 'breath' plus PE nominal affix *-yuy* 'one that tends to (be) -' (PUS initial /w-/ disappears in PE, and /yŋ/ is not an allowed PE cluster). Compare Proto-Uralic *wayŋi* 'breath' (Sammallahti 1988, 541; see further in Fortescue and Vajda, forthcoming). For a parallel to the present etymology—but from a different stem—compare Aleut *anR-* 'breath, life, spirit' (*anRa-Ri-* 'live,' *anRaRi-naX* 'human being'). Aleut ethnonym *unaŋan/unanaŋas* is from demonstrative *una-* '(those) down along the coast' rather.

But this raises the interesting question of what "land" or "home" meant for the nomadic ancestors of the present people, who presumably first entered North America from Siberia as the so-called Paleo-Eskimos some five thousand years ago, later to be replaced by "Neo-Eskimo" groups, the modern Inuit, and Yupiit, by now admixed with new people on the Asian side, as they spread in turn across the Arctic in connection with the Thule migrations.¹⁴ A clue is provided by the corresponding nomenclature of more recently nomadic neighbours, the Chukotkans, whose general term *nutæ-* refers to 'land, country, ground, tundra' but not to 'settlement, village,' for which another term, *nəm(nəm)*, is used, a word widely found across Siberia referring to a nomadic dwelling of a more temporary kind (Fortescue 2005).¹⁵ The Chukotkan term *nutæ-* may in fact be a borrowing from the Eskaleut speakers who preceded them in Chukotka as they moved up from below the tree line in pre-historic times (*nutæ-* from early or pre-PE **n'ula?*), perhaps as early as the end of the first millennium BC, the time of the Old Koryak culture on the Okhotsk Sea coast (Lebedintsev 1998). The basic Chukotkan form is a reduplicated singulative *nutænut*, while a different

13. Tundra Samoyeds have similar ethnonyms—Nenets, Enets, and Nganasan also mean '(real) human being.'

14. See Fortescue and Vajda (forthcoming) for converging linguistic, archaeological, and genetic data supporting the picture which presupposes that the "Paleo-Eskimos" did indeed speak a language ancestral to Eskaleut.

15. *Nutæ-* is not found amongst the more settled, forest- and river-dwelling Itelmen except as a (recent?) loan from Chukotkan neighbours—their basic word for 'land, country, earth' is *səmt*.

singulative form *nutæ-lqən* means ‘ground, earth.’¹⁶ The same connotation of tundra vegetation is present in derivatives like Chukchi *nota-nta-* ‘go and fetch s.th. from the open country such as berries and roots.’ The Kolyma Yukaghirs called a nomadic tribe of the tundra north of them (probably Chukchi or Even) *čorqəd’i*, literally ‘tundra people’ from *čor(qə)-* ‘glade, clearing, tundra,’ originally ‘firm, hard’ (Nikolaeva 2006, 141).¹⁷ Note that Uralic- and Chukotkan-speaking people as well as the Yukaghirs moved north onto the tundra much later than the Paleo-Eskimos; Uralic people reached the Arctic coast no earlier than a millennium ago, according to Janhunen (2009, 74) and the maritime Chukotkans no earlier than the appearance of the Neo-Eskimo (Inuit/Yupiit) cultures around Bering Strait somewhat more than two millennia ago.

Words for moving around nomadically across the tundra cut cross the major language boundaries. The widespread stem reconstructible in PUS as **muy(e)-* is quite literally a “Wanderwort,” attested in Yupik as *məyə-/muyu-* ‘go off far,’ in Chukchi as *muu-/myu-* ‘nomadic’ (and *muulʔən*, Koryak *məyulRən* ‘nomadic caravan’), in Samoyedic as *müä* ‘day’s journey by caravan’ (and *müätə*, Nenets *m’ud*, Nganasan *myðə* ‘tent caravan’), and in Yukaghir as *myðo-* ‘nomadise, roam.’ In CAY it is specifically ‘not want to go back to one’s undesirable former living conditions,’ and in CSY ‘go far in the distance, move from place to place, be a caravan of travelers in the distance.’ It is quite possible that PE *muyət-/n’uyət-* (WG *nuut-*) ‘move (from one place to another)’ is also related, though the relationship is more obscure. The CAY correlate *nuxtaXtə-* is ‘move from one place to another,’ and NAI *yuyət-*, SPI *yukpak-* is ‘travel around.’¹⁸ The PI derivative *nuktəq-* (WG *nutsiR-*), apparently with *-ləR-/təR-* ‘quickly,’ is ‘move to another dwelling.’ Perhaps there is influence here from *nuna*, causing conflation between two originally distinct stems. The sense of **muyət-* overlaps in any case with that of **muy(e)-*.

Perhaps, then, for the original peoples of the Arctic tundra, “home” was that portion of the tundra that they regularly travelled around, and this has remained so for the groups that, with time, became sedentary in particular regions, such as the modern Inuit and Yupiit, each group with their perspective on the boundaries of *nuna*, ranging from the most local settlement

16. There is another Chukotkan word meaning ‘tundra, dry land’—namely, *æmnuy*, which contains prefix *æm-* ‘only,’ while *-nuy* may be related to *nutæ-* (**-ŋæ* is one of a number of “singulative” affixes, which indicate a single entity as opposed to plural ones, the plural forms often being shorter than the singular in these languages).

17. The Tundra Yukaghirs themselves, who have moved out onto the tundra in symbiosis with reindeer-herding Evens in relatively recent times, use another term, *josso*, meaning ‘frozen ground’ (cf. *jossuu-* ‘freeze’).

18. Note that SPI and NAI *also* have *nuut-* ‘move,’ which suggests the collision of two different original stems here, the y-initial forms reflecting **n’uyət-* with palatal /n’/.

and its environment to the wider tribal or dialect region and finally to the whole known world.¹⁹ They are all in a sense *nunamiut* ‘dwellers of *nuna*.’ These people (including the Unangan) all share a common demonstrative-based orientation system with local coastal, island, and riverine variants. Today the term *nunamiut* refers mainly to the inland Inuit of Anaktuvuk Pass in Alaska (who live in a prototypical upland tundra region), but in the past it was apparently also applied to the inland dwellers of Arctic Quebec and Labrador (reviewer’s comment). In older WG, according to Schultz-Lorentzen’s dictionary, it meant ‘earth dwellers’ (as contrasted with spirits).²⁰ In CAY and WG (and apparently elsewhere), the related term *nunamiutaq* has acquired a different meaning, ‘land animal,’ but ‘earth’ and ‘land’ could surely be replaced by ‘tundra’ as the original meaning in all these instances.

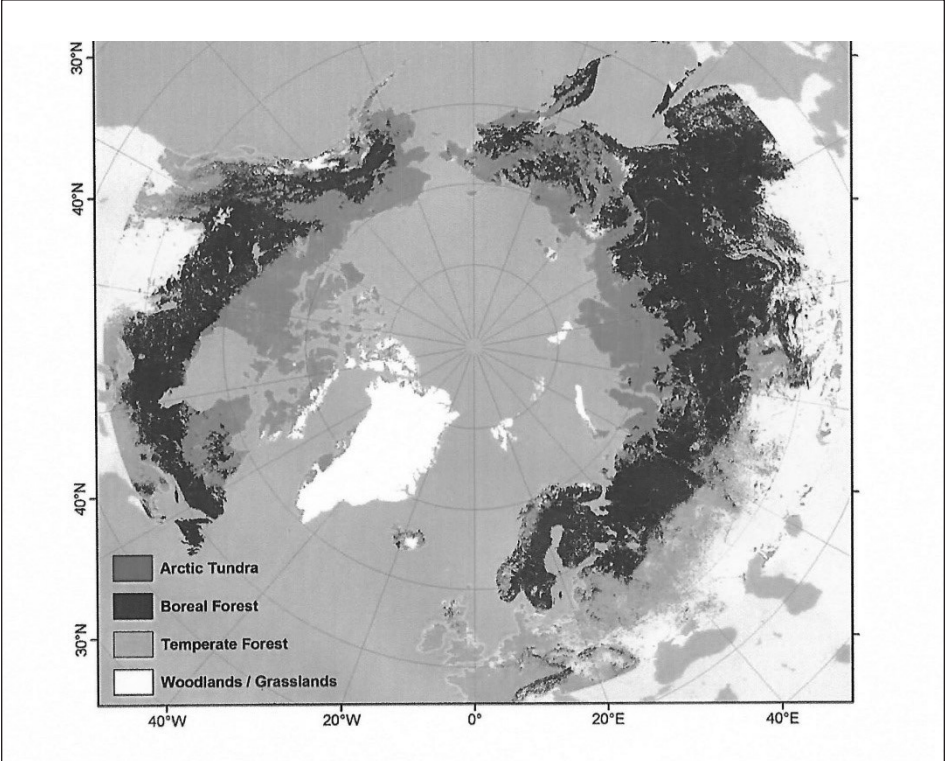


Figure 1. Extent of Arctic tundra.

19. Another ‘home’ word among settled Inuit is NAI *nayyuwik*, WG *naxxuik*, literally ‘place one grows up,’ based on the stem *nayu-* ‘grow (of plants),’ again with connotations of vegetal growth.

20. Schneider gives for ECI *nunamiut* ‘inhabitants of the earth (and by extension the whole earth), the worldly, those whose spirit is earthbound’—i.e., a specifically Christian sense introduced by the missionaries (reviewer’s comment).

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