**Iñupiaq Phrases and Conversations**

**Written and Recorded in the Kotzebue Dialect**

**With English Translations**

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FOREWORD

This booklet and tape are intended to provide basic useful phrases and expressions in Iñupiaq Eskimo for those interested in communicating in the language. Iñupiaq grammar is very different from that of English, and Iñupiaq words are based on stems or roots, which are usually followed by one or more suffixes (postbases) and then by an ending. Qipmiq is a noun stem meaning 'dog.' Qipmiqaqtut adds the suffix -qaq- 'have' and the ending -tut 'they plural,' so that the entire word means "they have a dog or dogs." A single Iñupiaq word may therefore correspond to an entire sentence in English. Iñupiaq words may be singular or plural, and they may also be dual, meaning that they refer to exactly two people or things. Qipmiq 'dog' is singular, qipmik 'dogs(2)' is dual, and qipmich 'dogs' is plural. A singular word in the English translation refers to a singular in Iñupiaq. A plural word in English refers to a plural in Iñupiaq, and duals are translated by an English plural followed by a parenthetical 2, as above in 'dogs(2)'. English 'you' is used for the Iñupiaq singular; 'you(2)' stands for a dual, and 'you(3+)' for a plural.

Pronouns may be used in Iñupiaq, but they are usually omitted as in the example qipmiqaqtut above, since the ending-tut gives the subject 'they.' There is no difference between 'he' and 'she' in Iñupiaq, so a sentence that means 'he has arrived' can also mean 'she has arrived' and vice versa.

This material uses the dialect of Kotzebue and Noatak in Northwest Alaska. The dialect of the Kobuk River villages and Selawik and Buckland is rather similar, and these phrases will be understood there also. The North Slope dialect is somewhat more different, but the phrases in this booklet can be understood there as well. Seward Peninsula Iñupiaq, spoken in Nome and surrounding areas, is quite a bit different from the Kotzebue dialect, and these phrases will be harder to use in communication there. Canadian Inuktitut and Greenlandic are also different enough from Northwest Alaskan Iñupiaq as to limit the usefulness of this booklet with those dialects.

These lessons were inspired by the Yup'ik Phrase and Conversation Lessons by Anna and Steven Jacobson and borrow quite a lot from that work in terms of content and format.

**SECTION 1 Iñupiaq Sounds and Letters**

Iñupiaq uses many letters of the English alphabet, but the Iñupiaq letters often have sounds different from the English ones, so it is important to pay attention to the pronunciations given on the tape. Iñupiaq also has several letters not found in English, as shown below. Sometimes on computers we substitute ły for a dotted ł.

**Consonants:**

(1) p t ch k q

(2) ł s sr ły kh qh

(3) v l r ḷ y g ġ

(4) m n ñ ŋ

**Vowels:**

short: a, i, u

long: aa, ii, uu

diphthongs: ai, ia, iu, ui, au, ua

Two pairs of diphthongs are pronounced alike for most speakers in Northwest Alaska: ai/ia are pronounced alike and so are au/ua. For most people, iu sounds like the long vowel ii.