Welcome to Wainwright

The Village of Wainwright welcomes you. We are a traditional subsistence community with a strong focus on Iñupiat cultural values.

Wainwright is also a village negotiating change, as development brings new people and influences into our community. Recognizing that these changes have the potential to affect our way of life, we are taking steps to preserve our traditional lifestyle. This is why we created the Wainwright Community Guide.

This publication is intended to provide you or your company with essential information about our Village, and to outline cultural guidelines for interacting with the community. The Community Guide is a collaborative effort of the community leadership team, consisting of the Village of Wainwright, the Olgoonik Corporation and the City of Wainwright.

“There will be moments if you just go out there, and you are sitting there, if you actually just get into it enough, you can feel the world moving. I myself can attest to that. You sit still long enough, you’ll start sensing movement.”

– Wainwright resident

Cover photo:
The sun sets over a successful bowhead whale hunt in the Chukchi Sea, Spring 2015

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Iñupiat Values

WITH GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT FROM ELDERS, WE MUST TEACH OUR CHILDREN IÑUPIAQ VALUES:

Avoidance of Conflict
Compassion
Cooperation
Family and Kinship
Humility
Humor
Hunting traditions
Knowledge of Language
Love and Respect for our Elders and one another
Respect for Nature
Sharing
Spirituality

OUR UNDERSTANDING OF OUR UNIVERSE AND OUR PLACE IN IT IS A BELIEF IN GOD

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The Village of Wainwright embraces change, and actively seeks to welcomes visitors and business while at the same time maintaining our traditional way of life. Help us meet both goals by reading the Wainwright Community Guide thoroughly and following these guidelines:

Respect our Elders: Elders are revered in our community. Please show your respect by abstaining from taking photos without permission; allowing them to speak without interrupting; and giving them time for their opinions and thoughts to be expressed.

Avoid culturally sensitive areas: No entrance is allowed into the private Tribal lands that surround the Village without official permission from the Olgoonik Corporation.

Support our efforts to help ourselves: Hire, train or otherwise involve Tribal members, including youth, in your activities in the Village whenever possible.

Give back to the community: Help improve the facilities that you or your organization uses while you’re in Wainwright.

Acknowledging our subsistence lifestyle: Hunting, fishing and whaling are different from recreational activities in the Village — they are an integral part of our traditional lifestyle and survival. Please respect the necessity for Tribal members to engage in these activities.

Respect Traditional Knowledge: It is forbidden and considered disrespectful to use any information gained by working in the community for personal presentations, case studies, or research without the expressed written consent of the Tribal Office.
Wainwright is an established subsistence village in arctic Alaska, located along a wave-eroded bluff on the coast of the Chukchi Sea. The Village is about 72 air miles southwest of Barrow. The vast majority of residents, about 90 percent, are Iñupiat Eskimos whose ancestry can be traced to the Utukamiut (people of the Utukok River) and Kukmiut (people of the Kuk River).

In 1826, an English naval officer named the inlet separating the Village from the Chukchi Sea after his officer, Lieutenant John Wainwright.

The Iñupiat name for this region is Ulġuniq or “Olgoonik.” Although the region around Wainwright has been inhabited by Iñupiat for thousands of years, the present Village was established in 1904, when the Alaska Native Service built a school and introduced medical and other services.

A post office was established in 1916 and the community was incorporated as a city in 1962. A U.S. Air Force Distance Early Warning (DEW) Station was constructed nearby in the early 1950s and was acquired by Olgoonik Corporation in 2016 in preparation for Arctic development.
“And the one good thing about before we had GPS’s, just traveling on the tundra I was always told by my mom, always look back and get your landmarks. That way you know which way is back, look back once in a while, so that way you will know which way to go back. You know we look forward and Oh wow!, new territory, and look back, Whoa!, where do I go next? – just follow my track back.”

– Wainwright resident

The Iñupiat of Wainwright live a traditional subsistence lifestyle and are dependent on fishing, gathering, and hunting of marine mammals for food and to maintain our traditional way of life.

The Chukchi Sea is widely regarded as the Iñupiat garden, and subsistence activities throughout the year revolve around whales, seals, walrus, fish, birds and land animals such as caribou. Salmonberries, willow leaves, wild rhubarb, stinkweed and Eskimo potatoes are popular foods that are gathered.

The bowhead whale is at the center of the Iñupiat culture. The entire community participates in the activities surrounding the hunt, ensuring that the traditions and skills will be carried on by future generations. Whaling crews hunt the bowhead in the spring and fall, and hold positions of great respect in the community. Crews share their catch with the entire community.

After the spring whale hunting season, whaling captains lead the community in celebrating a successful season with the Nalukataq festival, characterized most famously by the Eskimo blanket toss and Eskimo dancing.

Iñupiat value: SHARING

Stacks of whale meat await distribution to Wainwright households after a successful fall hunt.
Economy & Demographics

There are about 560 people living in Wainwright in about 150 households, most of whom are Iñupiat.

The community workforce consists of about 380 people, with principal employers being the North Slope Borough and Olgoonik Corporation. More than half of the employed population works for either the North Slope Borough or the North Slope Borough School District.

The North Slope Borough provides public electricity, maintains the road system and provides a piped water and sewer system. The Borough also owns and maintains the airport, and provides sanitation services.

Olgoonik Corporation subsidiaries manage contracts in the village that involve training and hiring residents in the areas of construction, equipment operations and maintenance, and environmental services.

Community members place a high priority on balancing wage jobs with their traditional subsistence way of life.

“I would like to see 70, 80% employment, being happy, healthy people who are motivated by employment while practicing their subsistence way of life and living our cultural values within the westernized environment just as they are practiced in the traditional way of living. That’s what I would love.”

– Wainwright resident
Iñupiaq, the native language of the Iñupiat people, is the first language for many of Wainwright’s Elders, and it is commonly spoken in the Village. One of the Tribe’s priorities is to create a strong language component in the schools, beginning with its youngest, pre-kindergarten students.

The current written form of the Iñupiaq language was developed in 1946 by Roy Ahmaogak, an Iñupiat Presbyterian minister from Barrow, and Eugene Nida, a member of the Summer Institute of Linguistics. Here are the words for some important subsistence foods:

**Iñupiaq Words**

QARGIG: The willow ptarmigan

TUTTU: The caribou

AGVIQ: The bowhead whale is at the center of subsistence activities in Wainwright, with several whaling crews actively hunting in spring and fall.

MASU: Eskimo potatoes

QAVVIK: The wolverine

UGRUK: The bearded seal

Aqpik: salmonberries

Iñupiat value: KNOWLEDGE OF LANGUAGE

Knowing the language is an essential requirement for understanding and preserving culture. While the Village of Wainwright has a number of fluent speakers today, it is taking active steps to ensure the language is preserved for future generations.
Governance

Wainwright is governed by the Trilateral Committee, a collaborative group made up of three representatives each from the Village of Wainwright, the Olgoonik Corporation and the City of Wainwright.

The Village of Wainwright is the governing body for Tribal matters and is a sovereign government recognized by the federal government. Its mission is to preserve and exercise the Tribe’s inherent sovereign rights and powers, to conserve and develop Tribal land and resources pursuant to Tribal law, custom and federal law, and to establish justice.

The Olgoonik Corporation, Wainwright’s village corporation, was established by the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971. It owns more than 175,000 acres of land surrounding Wainwright. The Corporation’s Iñupiat board of directors is guided by a two-fold company mission, to gain financial success in order to create shareholder opportunity, and nurture and protect the community and its heritage.

The City of Wainwright has a council of seven members elected by the voters at large, with one council member serving as mayor. The city manages Wainwright’s municipal facilities and interacts with the North Slope Borough and the state of Alaska.
The Olgoonik Corporation operates several businesses in the Village, providing employment opportunities to the community as well as essential services to residents, visitors and industry.

Personnel Camps: Olgoonik offers 40 beds through its personnel camps located within the village. From June through November, a full kitchen is available for guests.

Hotel and Restaurant: The Olgoonik Hotel offers 11 rooms, each containing two beds and a private bathroom. The building also houses the Village’s only restaurant, which is open to the entire community.

Olgoonik Corporation Store: A variety of essential items is sold through a small general store, including groceries, clothing, first-aid supplies, hardware and sporting goods.

Fuel Station: The fuel station supplies diesel and gasoline, as well as motor oil and limited auto supplies. Delivery of home/facility heating oil is also available.

Vehicle and Equipment Rentals: A variety of rentals are available to the public.

For more information:

- Personnel camps, vehicle and equipment rentals: Call 907-562-8728 and ask for the Wainwright Operations Manager
- Hotel and restaurant:
  - For hours of operation, call 907-763-2514
  - For reservations, call 907-349-3342
- Olgoonik Store:
  - For information, call 907-763-2615
- Fuel station:
  - For hours of operation, call 907-763-2832
The North Slope Borough provides water delivery, the landfill, electric services, the airport, police station, volunteer fire department and the health clinic. The Borough office contains a distance technology room.

The Wainwright Health Clinic, staffed by community health aides, is open every day and available around the clock for emergencies.

The Wainwright City Police Station is staffed full-time. Volunteers man the Wainwright Fire Station.

There are three churches in Wainwright, the Olgoonik Presbyterian Church, the Wainwright Baptist Church, and the Assembly of God Church. All visitors are welcome.

Alak School, in the North Slope Borough School District, provides education to 140 students from preschool to grade 12 and offers adult basic education and vocational education.

The Robert James Community Center serves as a gathering place for community meetings, youth events and other activities.

The Wainwright Cooperative store, owned by residents, provides a variety of household necessities.
“Outsiders look at documents and think they know what is happening here in the Village, but they need to experience what we have experienced for a long time to understand what we are saying or doing.”
– Wainwright resident

There are about 10 miles of developed gravel roads in and around Wainwright, one of which leads to a sewage lagoon, landfill and two fresh water lakes that supply the community.

Transportation within the Village is by car and often by four-wheeler or snow machine. There are no roads linking Wainwright to other North Slope Borough communities, which are reached primarily by air, snow machine or boat.

The North Slope Borough owns and maintains the Wainwright Airport, which offers scheduled and chartered air service from Barrow. Freight arrives by cargo plane and barge.

Wainwright is served by a U.S. post office, with mail arriving by air from Barrow. Wainwright telephone service is provided by Arctic Slope Telephone Association Cooperative, and cellular and Internet service is available.

Community residents frequently use social media to communicate with each other, and VHF to share news and talk to hunters who are out of cell phone range.

Iñupiat value: RESPECT FOR ELDERS

Elders are revered by the community and pass down treasured cultural and historical traditions through storytelling and lessons for younger generations. The wisdom and experience they have gained throughout their lifetime, along with their historical knowledge, are considered essential in decision-making processes.
The North Slope of Alaska has been home for the Inupiat of Northern Alaska for many generations. In the early 1900s, the reliable fish resources of the Kuuk River allowed our formerly nomadic people to settle permanently at Wainwright.

The Village of Wainwright is surrounded by 175,000 acres of private land deeded to Olgoonik Corporation through the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971. Visitors must seek permission from the Olgoonik Corporation to enter Tribal land.

The Wainwright Traditional Use Area occupies about 19,000 square miles and encompasses the lands used by the people of Wainwright for traditional subsistence activities. Nearly 90 percent of Village residents fish, hunt and gather much of their food, maintaining the subsistence day of life that reaches back for thousands of years.

The area around Wainwright is also home to many sites of cultural significance, which are accessible only to Tribal members. Please contact the Tribal Office if you have questions.

Wainwright Tribal Lands

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“...outside entities coming in, why not have a mentorship program for students to see what you guys are doing so that way they could become interested in working in the work force.”

– Wainwright resident

Village Ordinances & Safety

The Village of Wainwright has a zero tolerance policy regarding alcohol and drugs, and neither is permitted to brought into the Village or consumed here.

A curfew is in place that limits youth of the Village to certain hours depending on the time of year.

If you are driving in the Village, please take it slow and be careful — we share the road with many modes of transportation, from snow machines to trucks to construction equipment. In wintertime, it is dark for much of the day and pedestrians are hard to see.
Wainwright has been the site of numerous community meetings, as development and research in the area has grown. We ask that entities requesting public meetings respect the community by following a few basic rules.

√ Contact the Village of Wainwright Tribal Office for permission to schedule a meeting, and for a copy of the written guidelines governing meetings. Be prepared to provide a written summary of the meeting’s content and goals, as well as your plan to publicize the meeting.

√ Check with the Village of Wainwright or City of Wainwright before scheduling the meeting to make sure there is no conflict with community activities.

√ Provide at least two weeks’ notice of your intent to host a meeting.

√ Contact the City of Wainwright to reserve the meeting space.

√ Coordinate transportation and translation services for Village Elders.

√ After the meeting, provide the Tribal Office with a written summary appropriate for distribution to Wainwright residents.

“Iñupiat value: RESPONSIBILITY TO TRIBE
Tribal members serve on Wainwright governing entities as well as on a wide variety of regional and national organizations. Village residents frequently participate in community meetings to set priorities and provide input on timely issues.”

– Wainwright resident

“Putting the information out there in the way that the community wants it to be put, is really important.”

– Wainwright resident
The rich natural resources and cultural history of the Wainwright area has drawn researchers to the region for many years. Recent development activities have made the Iñupiat and their surroundings even more popular topics for research, and researchers are frequently in the Village.

While we welcome the interest in our people, our first priority is to minimize disruption to life in the Village. The Tribe has developed a formal set of guidelines for researchers that is available through the Village of Wainwright (907-763-2575).

Researchers may be referred to Olgoonik Corporation (907-562-8728) for land- or resource-based studies.

The principal researcher must be prepared to provide information on:

- Goals of the research
- What is required of the Tribe/Village
- How the Tribe will benefit
- Funding source and sponsoring agency
- Plans for sharing research results

FROM THE Wainwright Traditional Use Conservation Plan

"When Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and conventional science data is gathered while conducting the project, credit will always be given to those providing information and will be cited in the final draft."
Can I come to Wainwright to hunt?
Access to the 175,000 acres of private land surrounding the Village is prohibited except with permission of the Olgoonik Corp. There are no Tribal guiding services available.

Can I make lodging arrangements once I arrive?
Lodging in Wainwright is limited and visitors should make reservations before traveling to the Village. Global Services Inc., 907-349-3342, handles reservations for the hotel.

What’s the weather like in Wainwright?
Wainwright falls within the arctic climate zone, characterized by seasonal extremes in temperature, from -56 to 80 °F. Winters are long and harsh with only a couple of hours of daylight, and summers are short but warm. The Chukchi Sea is ice-free from mid-July through September.

Which is correct — Iñupiat or Eskimo?
Both terms describe the Native people living in Wainwright. It is also correct to say Iñupiat Eskimo.
“There will be moments if you just go out there, and you are sitting there, if you actually just get into it enough, you can feel the world moving. I myself can attest to that. You sit still long enough, you’ll start sensing movement.”

– Wainwright resident

A traditional umiak frames a modern fuel barge during oil exploration activities near Wainwright in the summer of 2015.

All photos courtesy Village of Wainwright unless otherwise credited.