

George A. Ahgupuk, Iñupiaq (1911-2001)

- Developed technique for bleaching caribou, reindeer, and moose hides
- Artwork in collections such as Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian, California Academy of Sciences, Alaska State Museum at Juneau, and Seattle Museum of History and Industry

George Aden Ahgupuk was born on October 8, 1911 in the Inupiat village of Shishmaref, Alaska. Ahgupuk, also known as his Native name *Twok* (man), spent his childhood learning hunting and fishing from his family. In 1930, Ahgupuk slipped on ice and broke his leg, a life-changing accident. Ahgupuk was forced to remain in the hospital for months after developing a tubercular infection. While hospitalized, he began sketching scenes from his life in Shishmaref. After he left the hospital, with little access to drawing paper, he began drawing on animal hides, which later became one of his trademarks. Ahgupuk's illustrations depicted scenes of various types of hunting, village life, and Alaskan wildlife. He later branched out to use all resources that were available to him, and painted on any medium he could find, including: hides, seal and fish skin, plywood, and tree mushrooms. Ahgupuk's work became very popular among tourists and art collectors alike, and he remains one of the most well-known and celebrated Iñupiaq artists.