

# Inuit History and Heritage

- Our 5000 Year Heritage ..... 2
- Unity of Culture and Language ..... 3
- The Origin of Our Culture ..... 4
- Our Earliest History..... 5
- Our Ancestors ..... 8
- Europeans Discover Our Land and Culture..... 10
- Meeting of Two Worlds ..... 11
- Inuit Today..... 14
- The Inuit Regions ..... 16
  - Inuvialuit region..... 16
  - Nunavut..... 16
  - Nunavik ..... 17
  - Nunatsiavut..... 17

## Our 5000 Year Heritage

For 5,000 years, the people and culture known throughout the world as Inuit have occupied the vast territory stretching from the shores of the Chukchi Peninsula of Russia, east across Alaska and Canada, to the southeastern coast of Greenland. It is here, based on our ability to utilize the physical environment and living resources of this geographic region known as the Arctic, where our culture developed and our history unfolded.

Inuit are an original people of the land now known as Canada, and our history represents an important and fascinating story. It is not just a story about an early chapter of Canadian history. Indeed it is an epic tale in the history of human settlement and the endurance of culture. Each chapter of our story provides valuable lessons and insights about issues that matter to cultures everywhere. Our history is about people and their relationship to the environment and to each other; about dealing with change as well as the causes and consequences of change forced on us through colonialism; and about how we have reestablished control over our cultural, economic and political destiny through land claims and self government. Above all, the story of Inuit is about how we as a culture are able to live in balance with the natural world.

This is a story that we must begin to tell for ourselves. Unfortunately until now, most of the research on our culture and history has been done by individuals who come from outside our culture. Since the information that these individuals collected was seldom made available to us, the image held by much of the outside world about who we are is usually someone else's creation, not ours. It will take time to change this situation and we as Inuit are certainly prepared to work cooperatively with those who have devoted their professional lives to the study of our culture. In the meantime we will reinterpret the information gathered by others to help us speak about ourselves. This website represents an important step in that direction as it carries our own story throughout the world.

We will start by explaining that Inuit are not the only people living in the Arctic. We share the polar region with other indigenous cultures. As Canadian Inuit we have close ties with the Yupik and Inupiat of Alaska and Russia and with the Inuit of Greenland. We

### INUIT and CIRCUMPOLAR PEOPLES



have more distant biological and linguistic links with the Aleut. There are other indigenous cultures occupying the circumpolar regions of Europe and Russia each having a distinct history and cultural tradition. Recently, however, there has been a movement to unite indigenous peoples throughout the circumpolar world based on shared concerns especially about the Arctic environment and the benefits to be derived from economic cooperation and cultural exchange.

## Unity of Culture and Language

As Inuit we divide ourselves into two closely related groups based on language, environmental factors and certain cultural features. The first is the Yupik who occupy coastal southwestern Alaska, Nunivak and St. Lawrence islands and a small sector of the southeastern Chukchi Peninsula. There are approximately 25,000 Yupik living in Alaska and 1,300 in Russia. Although the Yupik language has the same origin as ours, it is not understood by Inuit. Besides language there are many other cultural features that distinguish Yupik from Inupiat and Inuit.

The second group includes the Inupiat of north Alaska and eastern Russia, the Inuit of Canada, and the Inuit of Greenland. Of these 152,000 Inuit, 2,000 live in Russia, 50,000 in Alaska, 45,000 in Canada and 55,000 in Greenland. Although certain differences in culture and language should be expected over such a vast expanse of Arctic territory, one of the truly amazing aspects of our culture is the extent of similarity from one group to another as you travel from the eastern shore of Greenland west across what is now Canada and Alaska to the shores of Siberia.

In the 1920's, for example, Knud Rasmussen, an Inuk ethnographer from Greenland, traveled by dog team from Greenland, west across Canada to the north coast of Alaska. As he did so, he was able to collect a vast quantity of information that we as Inuit can now use to help us understand our history and our cultural traditions. During his epic trip, Knud Rasmussen was able to understand without great difficulty, all of the dialects he encountered along the way. In addition to language, Inuit from Siberia to Greenland share a similar cultural history at least up to the time of contact with the outside world; we share many of the same values, stories, traditions and technology; and of course, Inuit everywhere take pride in being able to make our life comfortable and sustainable in what is so often described by outsiders as a hostile, even unlivable environment.

Today some Inuit still travel by dog sledge while others prefer the snowmobile, all terrain vehicles, or powerful boats. But the places we go at different seasons of the year and the reason we go to these places have remained almost unchanged since the first groups of Inuit established a network of living sites and travel routes connecting them to their seasonal land and marine hunting areas. For the most part, different Inuit groups across the Arctic established their own patterns of living sites, travel routes and land use. These areas, however, overlapped so that a network of travel routes extended from the shores of Labrador to the shores of the Bering Sea.

## The Origin of Our Culture

Although there are still many important questions to be answered, the available evidence tells us that within the vast geographic regions of the Arctic, our distant and more recent ancestors carved out a homeland and established a way of life that has retained a cultural identity, social coherence, and territorial integrity throughout each and every stage of our history. We think that it is true to say that no other living culture has maintained such a continuous and consistent way of life for such a long period of time over such a large territory.

When we speak about the origins and history of our culture, we do so from a perspective that is different from that often used by non-Inuit who have studied our past. For example, in our culture we do not divide the past from the present so we do not like to use terms such as "prehistory." Our history is simply our history and we feel that the time has come for us as Inuit to take more control over determining what is important and how it should be interpreted. To be of value, our history must be used to instruct our young and to inform all of us about who we are as Inuit in today's world. We do not want our history to confine us to the past.

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*"Today, no matter where we choose to travel, hunt, and camp, we find the traces of our ancestors.*

*From these, we have come to understand that our life is a continuation of theirs, and we recognize that their land and culture has been given to us in trust for our children."*

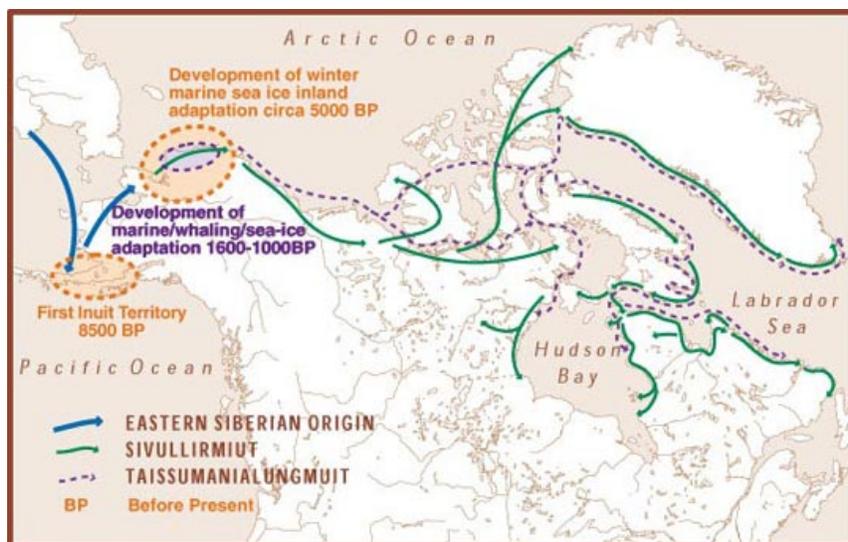
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Our past is preserved and explained through the telling of stories and the passing of information from one generation to the next through what is called the oral tradition. Inuit recognize the importance of maintaining the oral tradition as a part of our culture and way of learning. At the same time we realize that there are other ways to understand the past through activities such as archeology and the study of historical documents. Both ways of knowing must now be used by Inuit and it is our elders and our schools that will provide the necessary tools.

Archeology has been one of the important ways for discovering our past. Every summer archeologists from down south come to our land. Inuit often travel with them, giving advice about where to go and answering questions about the things they are finding. Now archeologists are actually being joined in their work by young Inuit who will someday take over their research. Now the challenge is ours to begin to rebuild an understanding of our past by using all of the information we now have from our legends, our real life stories, our knowledge about the Arctic environment and it's wildlife and from information now available to us through archeology.

## Our Earliest History

If we could travel back in time and visit this region about 8500 years ago, we would probably find a population living in small communities along the coastline of the Bering Land Bridge. We would have observed a way of life based on marine mammals, and other species of animals, birds, and fish that were hunted along the shorelines and islands of the ice-free waters. During certain seasons of the year we would have observed hunters and their families moving inland to hunt in the valleys and to fish in the freshwater lakes and rivers.



As the population of this area grew and new territory was needed, the settlements gradually spread north along the coast and probably inland using the large river valleys. Eventually these regions spread north of the Seward peninsula until they reached as far as the northern coast of Alaska. This was a very different environment since during the winter the sea was covered by a thick layer of ice. It was here that a remarkable shift in the way of life took place as our

ancestors developed the knowledge, skills and technology needed to utilize the winter sea ice environment to hunt marine mammals. This adaptation endures as one of the defining characteristics of Inuit culture from Alaska to Greenland. On the origin and migration route map you will learn more about where our very early ancestors came from, where they were living and the possible routes of movement to the coast of north Alaska.

These early groups that learned to live on the sea ice must have been very successful hunters since it looks as though their population started to grow and eventually expand eastwards. As they did so, new settlements were created. This movement east took place about 5000 years ago by a people we refer to as the Sivullirmiut which means the first people. In our legends these early people were often called Tunnit. Archeologists use the terms Predorset, Independence and Dorset to identify the Sivullirmiut.

In less than a thousand years, groups of Sivullirmiut traveled from the north coast of Alaska, east across Canada as far as southern Greenland. In Canada, early Inuit settled as far east and south as the Strait of Belle Isle on the coast of Newfoundland. As they moved, our early ancestors established villages and hunting territory. Like their ancestors to the west they were able to utilize the resources of the coast as well as those further inland. Although both land and coastal marine resources were important for our survival, as Inuit both then and now, we always relied on the harvest of marine mammals in every season of the year.

On the origin and migration route map you can see the possible routes that were used by the first Inuit to move east to create what is now the Inuit territory of Canada. As our early ancestors began to establish living places and hunting areas they began a process of continuous use of these areas year after year and generation after generation. Over time, patterns of regional groups started to develop and these have remained reasonably stable up to the present time. On the Sivullirmiut map you will see some of the important places where they actually lived. What is interesting is to compare this land use map of our earliest ancestors with current land use so you can understand how we continue to use the same territory.

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*"We Inuit have been here for a very long time but I don't know for how long. If you think about the past, calendars aren't important. It's more who was here first. They are the people we call the Sivullirmiut because that word means the first ones in our language."*

The tools and weapons used by the Sivullirmiut were very small and delicate and were made of stone, ivory or bone. Implements made of antler, ivory, bone, or driftwood were tipped or edged with chipped and sometimes polished stone blades. One of the most interesting things that the Sivullirmiut contributed to our cultural heritage were beautiful small carvings. Today, we still find these carvings to be very magical and they must have been used for spiritual purposes. Even our most skilled stone carvers of today are amazed by the beauty of these small tools and carvings. Perhaps the skills of our modern carvers goes back to this time.

By putting together information from archeology, from our stories and from our constant observations of the landscapes in which we live we can begin to understand the life of the people who made and used these weapons and mystical carvings. We know for example that they lived in small groups and used skin tents in summer and in the winter they used partly underground houses probably with walls of fitted stone or of blocks cut from the sod. The houses were probably protected by a roof made from their summer skin tents.

Maybe these groups even knew how to build the snow house. When we are traveling and hunting we often come across the places where these early Inuit made their home. They did not disturb the land even though they were here for over a thousand years. Our elders tell us that they came in silence and left in silence and that the Inuit living today must respect their deeds.

The camps of the Sivullirmiut were located in the places where they could most easily find and harvest the animals they needed. The bones left behind tell us they hunted seals, walrus, and caribou; they fished, hunted birds and water fowl, and depending on the season of the year they collected clams or mussels, sea weed, bird eggs and berries. The Sivullirmiut used delicate bird bone needles to make skin boots and clothing from the skins of seal, caribou and polar bear. They made and used lamps from soap stone to provide some heat and light and maybe to cook meat in a stone pot. Today we still use some of their quarries to get stone for carving.

The Sivullirmiut probably had skin boats but nothing is yet known about the exact type or design. Maybe they were like the kayaks that almost any older person can remember using. Our earliest ancestors also had to travel in winter and they did this by using small sleds that they could pull by hand. Maybe they had dogs but probably for hunting rather than for pulling a sled. Many elders tell about using polar bear skins rather than sleds to haul things in winter.

The Sivullirmiut are our earliest real ancestors, but many stories can be told about another group of people living in our land that we call Tunnit. Some of the stories describe the Tunnit as not being the same as the real Inuk while other stories describe them as just a different kind of Inuk. Stories may describe the Tunnit as being very big, almost like giants, while in other stories they are described as being very small. All the stories tell of the Tunnit as being very strong. They could carry huge stones and there are places where they made circles from these stones just for fun.



Sivullirmiut Territory

## Our Ancestors

In many ways, the Thule culture and way of life was similar to the Sivullirmiut. There were also important differences. The greatest similarity, however, is between the Thule culture and the Inuit way of life that was practiced throughout the Canadian Arctic until just a generation ago.

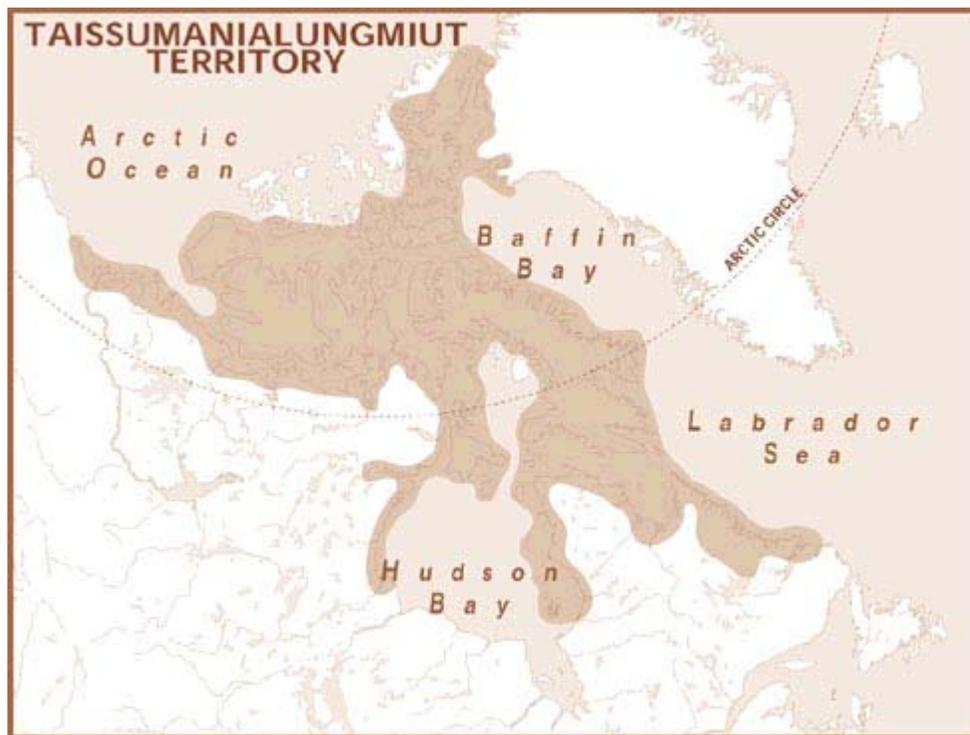
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*"Some elders say that the Tunnit were sent away by the real Inuit who are our great, great, great grandmothers and grandfathers. We do not really know but we do know that real Inuit have always been here so their blood must still be in our veins."*

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The most important distinction between what preceded and followed the period in our history that is referred to as "classic Thule culture" is that the Thule people developed the hunting weapons, boats and harvesting skills required to harvest the very large whales of the northern seas. This specialization was first developed on the north coast of Alaska and was probably the important reason why this new culture could spread east into Canada so quickly.

The map of the the Taissumaniungmiut living areas show that they are very close to the same places and areas used by the Sivullirmiut and by our own immediate ancestors. In fact, with the exception of southernmost Labrador, all of the territory used by ourselves and all of the Inuit that came before us has remained almost the same, generation after generation. Although Thule culture is often defined by the fact that they harvest large whales, this activity was not the only type of harvesting they carried out. Thule hunters also had the technology, skills and need to harvest seals, caribou, fish, and birds which the archeological information shows that they did on a regular basis during the various seasons of the year.



Taissumaniungmiut Living Areas

Thule people used dogs for hunting and travel, they built and used the seal skin kayak and they used, maybe even invented, the large open skin boat called the "umiak". By Thule times the beautiful and delicate tools and carvings of the Sivullirmiut were replaced by larger and more diverse tools and weapons for use with kayaks, umiaks and sleds. These included whips, harpoons, fishing spears, lances, bows and arrows, fur or skin clothing (including the parka and skin boots), needles and needle cases, the ulu or women's knife, soapstone lamps and pots, adzes, drum parts, snow knives, snow goggles, bow drills and toys. These artifacts express the commonality of the Thule culture and our recent Canadian Inuit life. Almost all of these items are easily recognizable even by the younger generation of today.

Thule winter villages were quite large, again more like those of recent Inuit rather than the small camps of the Sivullirmiut. This change in the size of the communities was probably based on having greater supplies of food from the whales and the manpower required to hunt them. Thule villages commonly contained six to thirty houses made of stone slabs and cut sod supported by a whalebone framework. When possible, the houses were set into a gently sloping hillside almost always facing the sea. Each house had a long entrance passage and a floor of flat rocks usually carefully fit together. Across the back of the Thule winter house was a sleeping platform exactly like the ones used in our camps until around the mid 1960's and what we still use today when we build snow houses while traveling in the winter. Our Thule ancestors used skin tents in summer and in winter they would build snow houses when away from their more permanent villages.



If someone were to ask the Inuit of today "where did your culture come from?" we would have to say it came from both the Sivullirmiut and the Thule. Together they provided the foundation from which the Inuit cultures of today developed.

## Europeans Discover Our Land and Culture

When the first schools were established in our communities we were taught that the Arctic lands remained undiscovered until the Europeans arrived and drew their own maps and created a new cultural landscape defined by English place names. At the beginning, the exploration was only at the margins and the rest was Terra Incognita meaning the unknown land. Now, we are beginning to know better. In our own schools we are providing history that begins at the real beginning, not at the one having its start some 4,500 years later. Not only are we replacing the European calendar of historical events with one of our own, we are also starting to replace the gazetteer of the north by getting Inuktitut names on the official maps of Canada.

For most of the schools in other places, however, the history and geography of the Arctic still begins with the European voyages of "discovery." One of the projects ITK hopes to initiate in the near future is to work with southern schools to help supply students with the types of materials needed to expand their understanding of the role Inuit and other indigenous peoples have played in the history of Canada. Our concern about history does not mean that Inuit history stops when the Europeans arrive. As Inuit we are interested in these voyages of exploration in part because their encounters with Inuit and with the Arctic environment are part of our own history. More important, however, Arctic exploration set the stage for a process of contact between Inuit and Europeans that would eventually have a devastating impact on our way of life.

Encounters between our ancestors and Europeans began in the late 1500's when the first explorers sailed into the icy waters of Davis Strait, Hudson Strait, and Hudson Bay. Although these first encounters were limited in their number and duration, as well as being geographically dispersed, they did set the stage for an eventual transition to what we can call the period of contact. Between the arrival of Martin Frobisher in 1576 and the famous disappearance of Franklin in 1848, about 22 explorers entered our territory. Not all of these had any direct impact on the course of our recent history. Nevertheless, with each trip, the map of the Arctic became more European and then our land itself started to be claimed by outsiders. Now some 400 years later, the land and resources along with our rights to control them within the framework of the Canadian constitution, are being returned to the Inuit. It was a process officially recognized on April 1, 1999 with the establishment of Nunavut.

## Meeting of Two Worlds

Some of our ancestors were introduced to new and often very useful materials and technology by the explorers, but these probably did not have a deep impact on their lives. It was only early in the eighteenth century when Europeans started to enter the Arctic, first as whalers and then as fur traders, that our way of life began to change very quickly. Our ancestors who were living at that time were all of a sudden able to replace bone with wood, stone with iron or copper, there were nails and needles, cloth and glass. If the items themselves were not useful then the people of those days could turn them into something that was. Inuit have always been very skilled at doing this.

Materials, tools, weapons all of these were desired by our ancestors but these things were not given out to Inuit for free. This situation was not limited to materials and technology. There were impacts on every aspect of our lives and culture. We were confronted with many new demands and we had to accept new values and meet new expectations. Even the oldest of our elders did not actually experience this stage of our history so we can only speculate on how it affected our culture.

We must try to figure out for ourselves what all of this really means. Were we giving up stone for iron, or simply replacing one useful material with an even more useful material? How did this process work with respect to traditions and values? What were the losses and what did we gain in return? What is remarkable about our culture is that we have always been able to incorporate change to create new adaptations and ways of living. Because of this we have been able to transform rather than abandon our traditions.

The whalers, the fur traders that followed the whalers, the missionaries, and then the government all wanted something from us in return for what they were prepared to give. As a result, many but certainly not all of the traditions, values, skills and knowledge that bound us together as Inuit gave way in response to the demands placed on us from the outside. Slowly, we started to lose control over the destiny of our culture and our lives.

The whalers were the first outsiders to come into the north for economic reasons based on the harvest of our resources. The Taissumanialungmiut or Thule Inuit exploited the large whales, but there is no evidence to show that this harvest could not be sustained. The explorers of Davis Strait and Hudson Bay brought back reports of huge herds of whales and this provided an incentive for commercial whalers to enter the Arctic whaling grounds.

Whaling that would have a direct impact on the life of Inuit living at that time began in the early 1700s. The Whaling historian Scoresby, who was writing in 1820 described the intensity of early whaling activity by the fact that between 1719 and 1778, a total of 3,161 Dutch ships alone had carried out whaling activity in Davis Strait. A single season could have as many as 35 or so ships just in Davis Strait. In those times the whalers would arrive as the ice broke up and leave when the new ice began to form. The only whalers that wintered in the Arctic were those that had their ships trapped or destroyed by pack ice.

After 1850, the patterns of whaling changed. Year round shore stations were established in some areas like Cumberland Sound thus creating a permanent presence of outsiders in the Arctic. It was the year round presence of the whalers that brought about a new level of impact on trade, on the pattern of seasonal land use and perhaps most significantly, on Inuit health.

In fact, soon after more regular contact with the whalers, it appears as though the Inuit population may have suffered a significant decline in population through the introduction of disease brought into the Arctic by the whalers. During his stay in the Frobisher Bay area in 1861-1862, the explorer Hall wrote about the health conditions that our ancestors had to confront and he even decided that we would not survive as a race:

*"The days of the Inuit are numbered. There are very few of them left now. Fifty years may find them all passed away, without leaving one to tell that such a people ever lived."*

A missionary stationed in Cumberland Sound during the early 1900s also wrote about the terrible impact the whalers had on the health of our people. He especially spoke about the toll taken by disease brought to the north by the whalers:

*"I have more than once... pointed out to these wretched people the whalers, the sure and certain goal to which they are traveling. The extermination of the whole of the Eskimo population in Cumberland Sound and elsewhere is only a matter of time, if some check is not put to these awful practices."*

Of course these predictions did not come true because we are still here today. Yet sickness did come to our land, it has not really gone away, and it has taken a terrible toll on our society over the years. But other "awful practices" took tolls of a different type.

During the last half of the 1800s over-harvesting of whales year after year by Europeans finally went beyond the limit of sustainability. The decline in the harvest made this activity no longer profitable for the commercial whalers, but it also meant that one of our important sources of food was endangered. This problem was made worse by the fact that towards the end of the whaling period the whalers turned to other smaller marine mammals such as beluga whales, walrus and even the larger seals.

At the same time the market for whale oil and other products was declining. Some whaling captains and crews turned to trapping Arctic fox. This marked the beginning of the fur trading era. The whalers supplied our ancestors with steel traps and taught them to trap the fox and then trade the fur to get credit to obtain guns, ammunition, and the other goods.

The transition to the fur economy occurred over a period of about 25 years so the economy and culture of fox trapping did not fully develop much before the 1920s. Thus, the first two decades of the twentieth century began a major transition in the type of economic adaptation that would define our Inuit way of life right up into the 1990s.

The best strategy for fox trapping required small groups to spread out over a large region. This tended to break apart our traditional social groups and to reduce the potential for cooperation that was so essential for our acquisition and sharing of food, skills and social responsibilities. In addition, the places where there was good trapping frequently did not coincide with our preferred hunting areas. When we talk to elders who remember these times they explain how their decisions were taken over by the fur trader who controlled the Inuit through his power to issue credit and to collect debts.

The need for goods or for repayment of debt and, what appears to be an apprehension to go against the wishes or economic strategy of the store manager, were responsible for hunters and their families establishing themselves in good trapping but perhaps poor hunting areas. The historical record provides abundant documentation of this situation. An RCMP report on Baffin Island states:

*"One native wanted to give a written statement saying the place was no good for hunting, and they wanted to go north... where there is good hunting but were afraid the White men would not like it. All the natives of this camp complained of hard times."*

The first missionaries entered the Arctic along the Labrador coast when the Moravians established a mission station at Nain in 1771. The Moravian Church is still active in this region. For most other areas, however, active contact with missionaries did not get underway for another 100 years. Missionaries expanded their influence in the eastern and other parts of the Arctic in the late 1800's. The missionaries had no direct ties with the government, except for their role in education and, in places, for medical services.

The RCMP began to establish their own type of influence when they entered the eastern Arctic in the early 1900s. The mandates of the missions and police created different types of impacts on the Inuit who were living at that time, one based on ideology and the other on law. The introduction of Christian teaching by the missionaries, resulted in significant changes in the way in which we viewed and explained the world and new meanings were assigned to living and dying.

Although the missionaries went north to bring the teachings of Christianity to Inuit, their presence was used by government for the purpose of carrying out rudimentary educational and health services. For the first half of the twentieth century, all of the education provided in the north was carried out in missionary schools. The relation between missions and the health services was even more direct. As one missionary wrote:

*"Medical work helped a great deal in building up an influence which afterwards became a dominant factor in turning people to Christ. They readily saw the value of proper treatment for disease, and even their conjurers came to the missionaries when suffering. Afterwards many of them reasoned that since the teachers were there to do good, their religion must be good too."*

We often hear non-Inuit talk about how missionaries were not good for us. When Inuit talk about this, they usually give another opinion and tell of their respect for the religious teachings, and for the other roles they played especially in those early days. Some have recently turned to more fundamental religions while individuals continue to stay with the churches of their childhood. One way or another these teachings have become part of our life and culture.

The services of the RCMP began with concerns about "law and order" in the north, the protection of northern biological resources, and the question of territorial sovereignty. The first posts were created in 1903 in the western Arctic with the mandate to demonstrate Canada's sovereignty throughout the region. A few years later, the RCMP established posts in the eastern Arctic. The location of these posts had certain strategic significance since they controlled access to the Arctic lands and waters. Some background about why this was necessary was stated in the House of Commons in 1924:

*"It is necessary to protect our rights against foreigners; to protect our fisheries, and to take care of our property generally. I think it is wise for us to exercise some oversight over the Canadian tribes, because... if you do not protect them, the traders who are not particularly anxious about the welfare of the native Eskimo, get in amongst them and debauch them, carry in liquor and exercise an evil influence among the tribes, and then the responsibility is ours. The Eskimo problem is beginning to be a rather serious one for us to handle, and we are establishing police posts at various points along the coast to protect the Eskimo and preserve their game."*

So in those days that was the level of understanding about our culture and its importance from the perspective of government. It simply was up to the trader, missionary and police to look after our lives and always on their terms not ours.

## Inuit Today

The Inuit of Canada are now in the post land claim era of our continuing history. Consequently, it is impossible to discuss our future as part of the larger Canadian fabric without giving serious consideration to the role we will play in the next phase of economic and political development throughout the Canadian North. We cannot, however, assume that this new role will be developed at the expense of more traditional activities which characterize our mixed subsistence based economies that are so vital for the long term economic and social health of our communities.

We cannot pursue avenues leading to new economic development if they ignore or impact upon our continuing ability to hunt or to earn an income from the application of traditional skills. Family members continue to contribute to household incomes that are derived from several different sectors of the new economy. In this way we are able to balance the emerging opportunities with our stable and sustainable traditional hunting and social activities. As part of our new political position we are able to support and strengthen our sustainable attachment to the territorial and resource base of our culture through direct participation in newly established management boards or through co-management programs.

During earlier phases of economic development, the approach most often taken was one that emphasized small scale projects organized at the community level. While not all projects were successful, the commercial and artistic success of Inuit carving and print making are concrete evidence of the value of this approach. The development of marketing cooperatives reflected new ways of taking more effective control over economic activity. Educational and training programs are providing both younger and older Inuit with an opportunity to reshape traditional skills and acquire modern technical skills that help support economic initiatives. One of the most promising economic development areas is in the tourist sector, especially for ecological and cultural tourism.

While Inuit communities were experimenting with economic development programs at the local level, industry and governments in Canada began paying greater attention to large scale development projects especially those linked to the exploitation of hydrocarbon reserves, mineral deposits and hydroelectric potential.

Our cautious interest in larger scale development, reshaped by land claims, has now opened a new chapter of northern development.

Not only have land claim agreements provided a legal and administrative framework vital to our orderly economic development, but the negotiating process has also served as a training ground for the rapid growth of Inuit expertise. Perhaps most importantly, the land claim agreements have provided significant working capital that our regional organizations can use for initiating a wide range of economic development projects that reflect local as well as regionwide ideas from an Inuit perspective.

Today there is a new sense of optimism fueling economic planning at local, regional, and national levels. There is also a great desire to achieve economic self sufficiency in the north in a way that incorporates our cultural values into the many new businesses which will form the backbone of the emerging economy. The Inuit regional organizations have their own economic development aims and joint ventures between regions are beginning to take shape. Throughout all of this activity there is a continuing effort to emphasize and follow the principles of sustainable development and formal processes have been created to ensure that all major projects are subject to environmental and social impact assessments.

Already there are new and interesting economic programs under way. Airlines, offshore and high seas fisheries, ecological and cultural tourism, Arctic foods, marine transportation, hunting and fishing for non-Inuit and real estate. These, and other businesses are helping to create economic momentum which in turn helps spawn yet another level of economic spin off and, through the creation of support companies, additional employment opportunities in all sectors of the economy.

In 1994 the Canadian Inuit Business Development Council was formally established. This council brings together all regional Inuit organizations for the purpose of promoting economic development within the broader context of Inuit culture. The objectives of this council reflect Inuit aspirations and define the potential scope of future economic activities. They are:

- to organize the members into a cooperative network to promote economic development and self-sufficiency in Inuit regions and communities;
- to develop economic cooperation, trade, and business ties among Inuit corporations and businesses, not just in Canada but in the circumpolar world;
- to promote Inuit employment and training opportunities in cooperative economic ventures and activities undertaken by Inuit communities, organizations or other groups.

# The Inuit Regions

## Inuvialuit region

The Inuvialuit region is located in the northwestern part of the Northwest Territories. The Inuit population is 11,000 living in the mainland communities of Inuvik, Aklavik, Tuktoyaktuk, and Paulatuk and the two island communities of Sachs Harbour (Banks Island) and Victoria Island. Inuvik is the administrative centre for the region and has a total population of 3,100.

The mainland communities are the only Inuit communities in Canada that have connecting roads to the south. The communities of Sachs Harbour and Holman continue to rely solely upon air and marine connections for transportation and supplies however.

Locally elected community councils oversee the administration and delivery of a wide variety of services to the hamlet residents.

The Inuvialuit region is poised for major economic development as extensive oil and gas activities begin to move into the production stage. Accompanying this rapid burst of economic development are concerns that the social and cultural lives of the Inuvialuit will be disrupted.

## Nunavut

Nunavut has an Inuit population of 40,000 living in the regions of Baffin (eastern region), Kivalliq (central region), and the Kitikmeot (western region). Nunavut was created on April 1, 1999 and encompasses one-fifth of Canada's landmass.

The territorial capital, Iqaluit, is the largest community with a population of over 11,000 and growing quickly.

**Baffin Region - (Qikiqtaaluk)** The Baffin region is located at the eastern part of the former Northwest Territories including Baffin Island and the eastern High Arctic Islands. The Inuit population of the region is approximately 12,000 living in 12 coastal communities: Iqaluit, Cape Dorset, Hall Beach, Igloolik, Arctic Bay, Resolute Bay, Pond Inlet, Grise Fiord, Clyde River, and Pangnirtung.

The economy of the region is based upon renewable resource harvesting including a commercial inshore and offshore fishery, arts and crafts, tourism, and the public and service sectors. Communities depend upon air service and spring sealifts for transportation and supplies.

**Kivalliq (formerly Keewatin)** The Kivalliq region lies on the western coast of Hudson Bay and includes Southampton Island. over 11,000 Inuit live in seven communities: Rankin Inlet, Chesterfield Inlet, Baker Lake, Coral Harbour, Whale Cove and Arviat.

Renewable resource harvesting is a primary economic activity and includes a caribou and arctic char processing plant. Tourism has grown substantially in the region and there is some growing interest in mineral exploration as well. The public sector is a major employer in the region.

**Kitikmeot** The westernmost region of Nunavut has an Inuit population of 11,600 and includes the Boothia Peninsula and Victoria Island. The communities are Cambridge Bay, Kugluktuk, Umingmaktok, Bathurst Inlet, Taloyoak, Gjoa Haven and Kugaaruk. As well as renewable resource harvesting such as a commercial char fishery and musk ox harvest, the region has considerable mineral wealth that is in the process of being explored and developed. In particular, the Bathurst Inlet road and port infrastructure project has the potential to rapidly advance economic development in the region while providing an important land link to the south.

## Nunavik

The region of Nunavik lies north of the 55th parallel in the province of Quebec. Over 10,000 Inuit call Nunavik home and live in 14 communities including: Kangiqsualujuaq, Tasiujaq, Aupaluk, Kangirsuk, Quaqtaq, Kangirsujuaq, Salluit, Ivujivik, Akulivik, Puvirnituaq, Inukjuak, Umiujaq, and Kuujjuarapik. Kuujjuaq is the regional administrative centre with a population of approximately 2,200 residents.

With a lack of roads connecting the communities, the primary method of transportation between them and the south is via air and marine vessels.

Each community has its local administration provided by municipal councils as established by the Northern Village Corporation. Each Northern Village is part of the Kativik Regional Authority that oversees the administration of the region.

The Kativik Regional Government is responsible for the delivery and coordination of municipal infrastructures and services, manpower and training, environmental issues and the coordination of economic policy. The Kativik School Board's responsibilities include the administration and delivery of education services to the people of Nunavik. The Kativik Regional Board of Health and Social Services is responsible for the administration and delivery of health and social services to the residents of the region.

Renewable resource harvesting, the Raglan nickel mine, tourism, the public sector, transportation and the service industry are all important elements of the regional economy.

## Nunatsiavut

Over 5,000 Inuit inhabit the five northernmost coastal communities of Labrador and the more southern communities of Happy Valley-Goose Bay and North West River. The coastal communities are Nain, Hopedale, Postville, Makkovik and Rigolet. Nain, with a population of 1,100, is the administrative centre for the northern coastal region.

Due to a lack of roads connecting the coastal communities, they can only be accessed by regular air service and marine transport. Locally elected community councils oversee functions and the provision of services to the municipalities.