

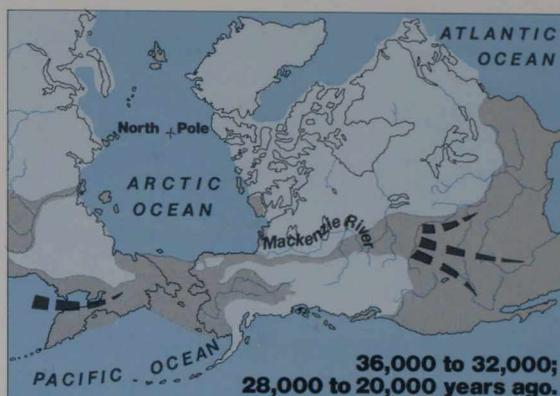
## The Time Before History

CANADA'S first settlers arrived some twenty-five thousand years before the white man. They came over a land mass a thousand miles wide, now covered by the Bering Sea—a rolling, treeless plain with unnumbered small lakes, occasional hills, thick grasses and plentiful game.

They cannot properly be called Mongolian nor Asian (any more than they are logically called Indian), since they lived eons before there were places or peoples with those names. They were members of the same, widely dispersed race as the highly intelligent cave painters of Europe who are now called Cro-Magnon.

They moved slowly off the land mass and onto North America, following mammoths, caribou, saber-toothed cats, horses and bison through Alaska, down the Mackenzie River Valley and along the east slope of the Rockies. The passage took hundreds of years. The upper part of North America—all the land above the Chesapeake and Delaware bays except for the Mackenzie River Valley—was covered by two sheets of ice, sometimes a mile thick. The valley was walled by ice, and the walls in some places were only twenty-five miles apart. Some immigrants followed big game south, and their descendants would eventually build palaces in Mexico, pueblos in New Mexico, hogans and long houses in the eastern forests of North America and monolithic walls in Peru. Some stayed in the valley for generations, hundreds of years, perhaps thousands.

Around 18,000 BC the glaciers covered the corridor too. There would be no human beings on the northern half of the continent for eight



**A view from the top:** Ice locked up moisture so that the floor of the Bering Sea became a land bridge between Siberia and Alaska.

thousand years, until after 10,000 BC, when the weather turned warmer and wetter and the ice melted into lakes and bays and an inland sea.

By 9000 BC big game hunters were above the Bay of Fundy in Nova Scotia; and by 4000 BC there were foragers, fishermen and hunters of small animals from Newfoundland to Vancouver Island. The big game was gone, perhaps hunted to extinction.

As the ice melted, a second migration occurred. The new Indians came by boat from Asia some fifteen thousand years or more after the first immigrants. By then the land mass west of the Alaskan coast was covered with water. Some probably stayed in the north where their descendants would become the Inuit or Eskimo.

NORVAL MORRISSEAU is a successful artist. To say that—to emphasize his success—is to confuse a point. By an Indian standard, success is not measured by money, publicity or widespread acclaim. Morrisseau was raised by his grandparents, Potan and Vernique Nankonagos, on the Sandy Point reserve. Even after his first successes, he continued to live the life of a nomad, often sleeping in vacant boxcars with his friends. More recently he has returned to Sandy Point and traditional ways. His paintings—semiabstractions—have elements of traditional Ojibwa religious beliefs and Catholic traditions. His cover painting first appeared on the November 1976 issue of *The Canadian Forum*. Here is Morrisseau's explanation of its meaning:

*It's divided into two parts: the world of the white man represented by a government or corporation white man and a construction or miner white man. The Indian figure is the older generation of today and his ancestors are behind him looking backwards to the treaties they made with the white man. He speaks about the old ways. The baby looks aggressive. He represents the younger generation, the militant who speaks about what he wants and his words cross the lines between the white and Indian. His fist is clenched. The animals are protesting the change in their environment; they are an important part of the land, water and the Indian's life. The centre part of the painting is where I illustrate the land and its ownership.*