

when the Arctic was definitely warmer and they show significant cultural differences from their Paleoeskimo forerunners. The most important was the ability of the Thule Inuit to hunt the large bowhead whale, which could weigh as much as 25 000 kg.

Many of the tools left by Thule Inuit, such as large harpoons, appear designed to hunt this animal. Many of their artifacts like sled parts and knives were made from whale bone. Large boats, called *umiak*, were used in whale hunting. Whale ribs and jaws were used to build winter houses and whale meat probably formed much of the Thule Inuit diet. Blubber was used for heat and light. Many of the artifacts we have come to associate with today's Inuit appear to have been developed by the Thule people.

Around AD 1400, a severely cold period struck the Canadian Arctic and bowhead whaling ended, forcing Inuit culture to take on a new form that lasted until the arrival of Europeans. This last stage is sometimes referred to as the Neoeskimo period and is often taken by anthropologists as the baseline for describing Inuit culture before it was influenced by outsiders.

Inuit remained hunters, as they are today. The Neoeskimo adaptation can be generally outlined as heavily concentrated on small seals, especially the ringed seal which was hunted year-round. These Inuit, however, also hunted small whales and walrus by *qayaq* during the short summers, tracked caribou during their northward migration, and fished and fowled.

These pre-contact Inuit lived in snowhouses, or *igluit*, all winter, and in skin tents during the summer. They moved often, either to find new game when local resources were scarce, or to intercept migratory animals. Like their Paleoeskimo and Thule predecessors, they wore tailored clothing made of several layers of caribou and seal, cooked their food and heated their dwellings with seal oil burned in stone lamps. They made harpoons, bows and arrows, and knives from stone, bone and ivory, and travelled by dog team in winter and by *qayaq* and *umiak* in summer.

Typically, the immediate social group consisted of 50 to 100 people, composed of related men, their wives and children. Leadership was held by the oldest men because of their superior knowledge of hunting and animals. There were also shamans, called *angaguk*, who used "spirit helpers" to cure sickness and help find animals. Disputes between individuals and groups were resolved through the mediation of the elders and *angaguk*, although blood feuds did occasionally arise.

Each group used well defined and recognized territories of several tens of thousands of square kilometres for hunting and fishing during the year. As mobility and flexibility were hallmarks of traditional Inuit life, however, territorial boundaries could be crossed for travel and hunting, and households could shift among groups from year to year.