

stewardship of the natural environment. Many of these activities are in partnership with the Government of Canada.

A SNAPSHOT OF THE CANADIAN ARCTIC

The People: Cultural Diversity and a Rich Heritage

Northern Canada is first and foremost the homeland of Indigenous communities. Attachment to the land and dependence on local resources for physical and spiritual sustenance are deeply rooted characteristics of their cultural heritage. Each of the Inuit groups and First Nations identifies with a traditional territory, shaped by thousands of years of continuous occupation. Their communities are scattered over this immense region, located mainly on major rivers and along the coastline. Many are accessible only by air or seasonal sea and river transport.

In the Yukon, approximately 21 percent of the population of 31 000 are Indigenous; in the Northwest Territories, 50 percent of the 42 000 are Indigenous; while in Nunavut, 85 percent of the 25 000 are Indigenous. In Nunavik and northern Labrador, Inuit and First Nations make up a majority of the resident population. United by a common language, there are some 41 000 Inuit living in 53 communities across northern Canada. First Nations often make up the majority population in another 46 communities. The most startling demographic feature of the Indigenous population is its youth — as many as 50 percent are under the age of 15 years — setting the stage for some important challenges in the near future that will be shaped by the needs of this very young society.



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