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The brief summer brings a rush of growth and life, as though the energy of the growing season were made more intense by its short duration. The land becomes alive with tiny flowering plants, with lemmings, with nesting birds, and the great herds of caribou. The fish run in the streams, and whales and seals migrate along the Arctic shores. Yet even in winter, the land and sea sustain a richness of animal life that has been the basis of Inuit life and culture since time immemorial.

The Arctic is the home of the Inuit and the land they love. Yet for Europeans, and for Canadians, one-third of whose country is Arctic, the Arctic means something different. It has been a frontier, not only in a geographic and economic sense but also as a metaphor for the limits of human experience and progress. The Arctic has been the object of Western man's search for a shorter passage to the Orient, and for riches within it. But few have chosen to call it home, even for a few years, and fewer still remain there when their work is done. To Europeans and North Americans, the Arctic has been a testing ground for their physical endurance, their technology, and their entrepreneurial and organizational skills. Since 1940, the Arctic has also become a strategic frontier, albeit one which its inhabitants fervently hope will never be used in war.

The experience of the Inuit since the arrival of Europeans in their country has been dominated by two facts. One is that they live in a harsh and distant environment, incapable of agricultural production. The other is that they are few and scattered, in a territory sought after for control and security reasons, both for its natural resources and for its global position, by peoples much more numerous and societies much more powerful than their own. It is a triumph of the Inuit spirit, and a credit to Canadian society, that in the face of these realities the Inuit remain today a vital, proud, and distinctive people, with an important contribution to make to their country.