

Canada The North



The enormous expanse of Canada's Yukon and Northwest Territories makes up 3 862 199 square kilometres, or 40 per cent, of Canada's total area. With a breadth of 3 000 kilometres and a northwards extent to within 5° of the Pole, it is a vast and varied region.

In the far west, it includes North America's highest mountains, among them Canada's loftiest peak, 5 951-metre Mount Logan (Yukon). Climatic conditions here permit trees to grow as far north as the shores of the Beaufort Sea (Arctic Ocean). In the central region, the land is flat and the climate harsher, and barren tundra prevails. Among the high Arctic islands, summers are extremely short, and elevated areas are permanently covered by glaciers.

In almost half the entire area, the annual frost-free season does not exceed 60 days, and farming is virtually impossible. However, mineral re-

sources, including both metals and hydrocarbons, are abundant and represent a source of wealth that is only beginning to be tapped.

The North's population of 65 000 is sparse; there is only one person for every 60 square kilometres of land. Among the native Inuit and Indians, who make up about half the total inhabitants, hunting and trapping animals on both land and sea are ancient skills, furnishing not only food, but also clothing, shelter and many tools and utensils.

As modern technology has moved into this region in the wake of resource projects, life in the North has begun to change. Aircraft, icebreakers, snow-

mobiles and satellite communications are creating a new northern way of life — though efforts are also being made to preserve links with the culture that has sustained the people of the Arctic for thousands of years.

The European exploration of these regions began as a search for a north-west sea passage between Europe and the Far East. A series of English explorers probed the straits north and south of Baffin Island without success. It was not until the nineteenth century that a route was found, and even today, the passage is not considered commercially viable.

In 1670, a British charter granted sole trading rights in the entire Hudson Bay drainage basin (then called Rupert's Land) to the Hudson's Bay Company. The Northwest Territories were later added to this domain. They were first explored in 1789 by Mackenzie, who gave his name to the great river he followed to its mouth in the Arctic Ocean.

Shortly after Confederation (1867), this entire territory was acquired by Canada and portions of it were gradually added to the adjoining provinces during the ensuing 50 years.

For Europeans and southern Canadians, the harsh northern wilderness held little attraction until the lure of gold drew thousands of prospectors into the northwest at the end of the nineteenth century. Dreams of a golden bonanza soon faded, but enough settlers remained to establish a new northern economy, largely based on mining. Today, scattered communities produce copper, silver, gold, lead and zinc, as well as supporting extensive oil and gas explorations under some of the most severe climatic conditions on earth.

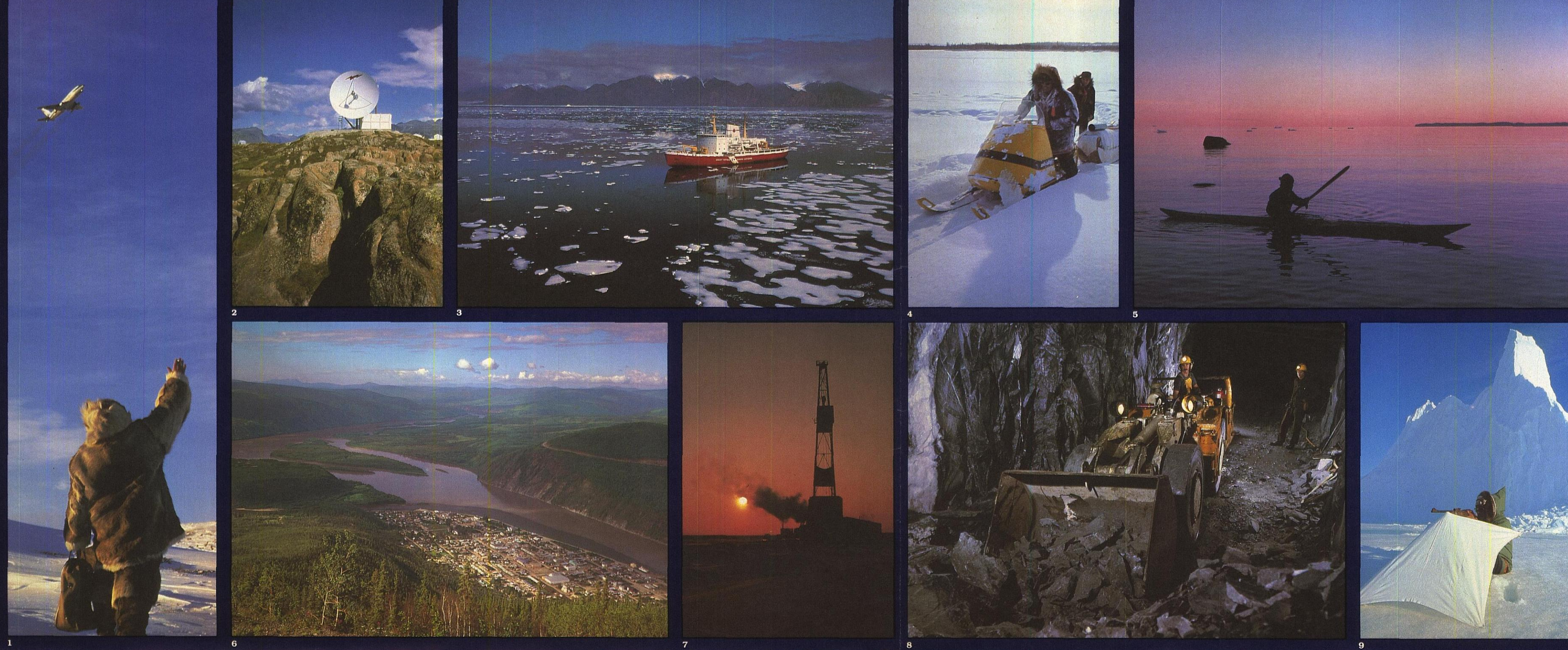


Geography



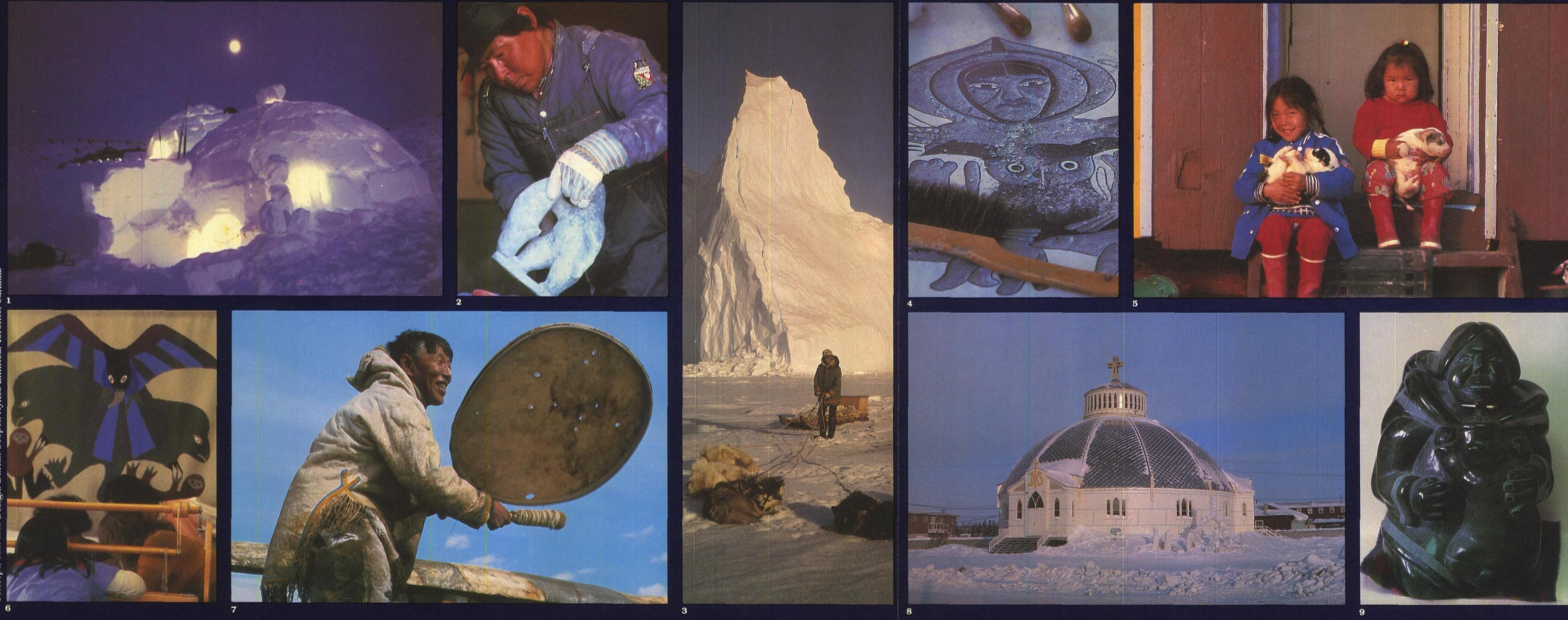
1. Polar bears, which rule the bleak snowscapes of Baffin Island, roam as far south as Manitoba. They are part of the Arctic's surprisingly varied wildlife, which includes wolves, foxes, caribou, musk-oxen, seals, walrus, and many species of bird.
2. Summer wildflowers blossom near North Fork Pass in the Yukon's Ogilvie Mountains. The climate in this western mainland region is comparatively mild by Arctic standards.
3. Glaciers, literally rivers of ice, are common in the high Arctic islands. This one flows between mountain ridges further south, in Kluane National Park.
4. The Alaska Highway links the Yukon's capital, Whitehorse, with points south in British Columbia, and northwest in the U.S. state of Alaska.
5. The austere beauty of rock and ice sculpture is characteristic of the Arctic landscape. About a third of Canada's North is covered by boreal forests or mountain vegetation. The rest is barren tundra or glaciated elevations.

Economy



1. Commercial jets have followed in the wake of the earlier "bush pilots" who first opened the North to economic development.
2. Microwave communications relayed via satellite keep Arctic outposts in touch with the world.
3. Icebreakers escort summer supply ships to settlements and outposts in the Arctic islands.
4. Snowmobiles are replacing the dog-sled as the basic mode of transportation in the Arctic, where roads are scarce.
5. The elegant kayak keeps the ancient Inuit way of life alive off the coast of Ellesmere Island.
6. Dawson City (Yukon) had a population of some 30 000 at the height of the gold rush. Today, it has about 1 000 residents.
7. Oil and gas exploration, particularly in the Beaufort Sea, is changing the nature of the Arctic economy.
8. Gold can still be found in the Northwest, as this active gold mine near Yellowknife attests.
9. A hunter on Baffin Island applies modern weaponry to an age-old task.

Culture



1. An igloo glows in the Arctic night. Inside, it's much warmer than out, but the interior is still below freezing.
2. Inuit soapstone carvings are now widely distributed and collected.
3. A dog-sledder rests his team on sea ice near a towering iceberg.
4. Cape Dorset (Baffin Island), where this lithograph was made, is the principal Inuit artistic centre in the Canadian Arctic.
5. Arctic youth (both two- and four-legged) faces a future full of challenges and opportunities.
6. Inuit weavers work beside an example of their craft in Pangnirtung (Baffin Island).
7. A traditional Inuit drummer performs for dancers at Arctic Bay (Baffin Islands).
8. A church in Inuvik (Mackenzie Delta) reflects the shape of the igloo.
9. Sculpture proclaims the Inuit's unique place in the family of man.

Concept: Rex and Design, Burns, Cooper, Hynes Limited, Toronto, Canada.