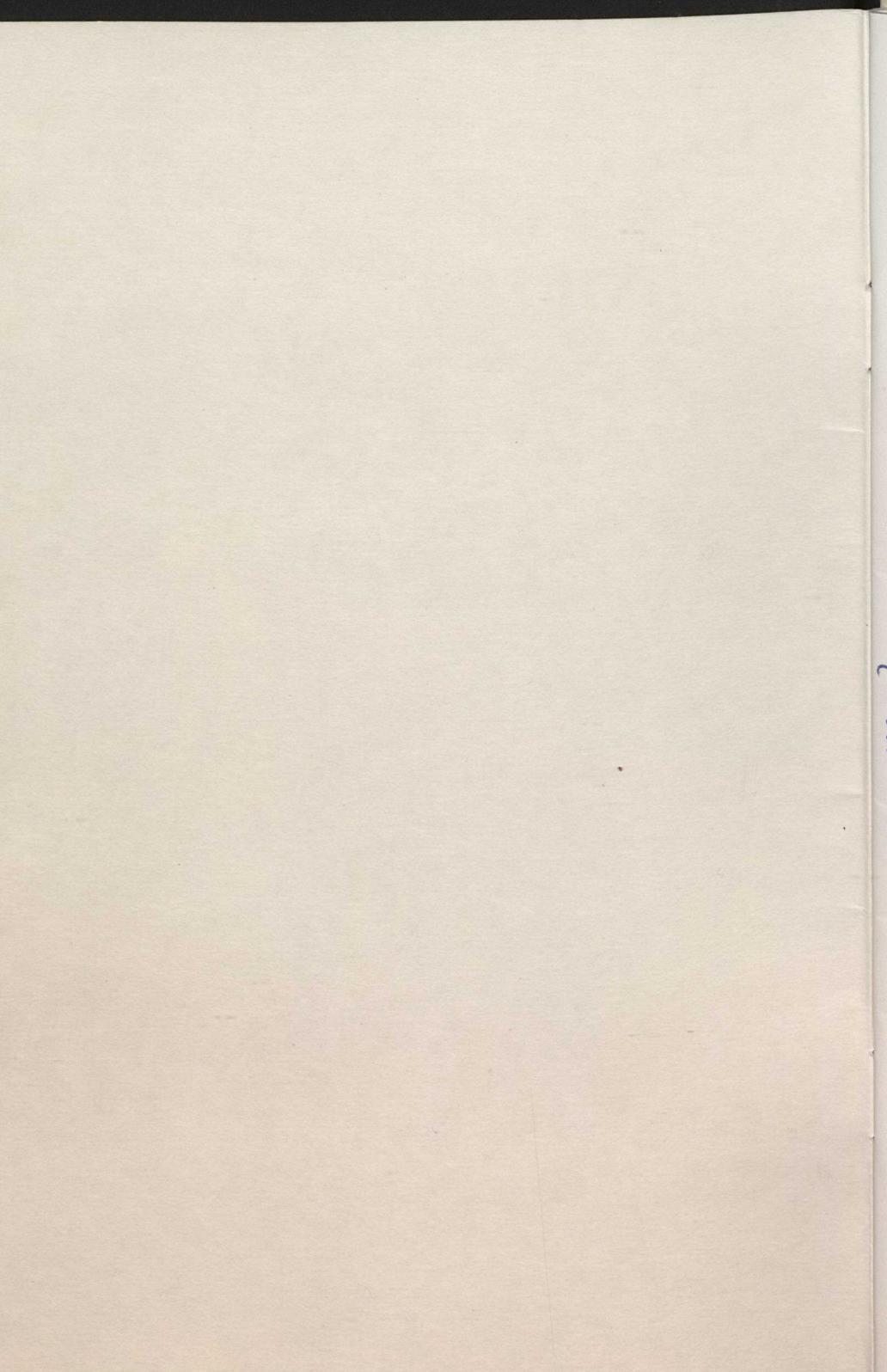


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The Inuit of Canada

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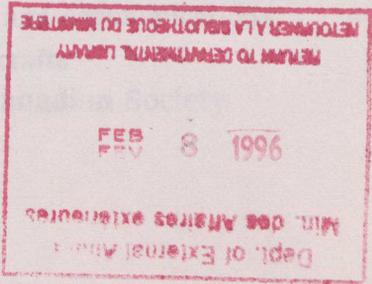


The Inuit of Canada

By Peter J. Usher
George Wenzel
Peter Jull

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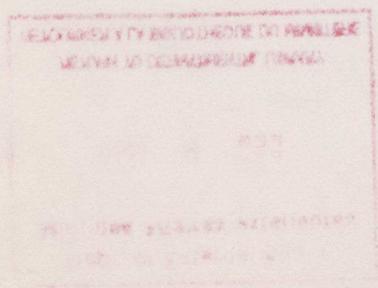


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The Unit of Canada

by Peter J. Fisher
George W. Brown
Tom Hill



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Introduction

Over the past thousand years, as Europeans penetrated the North American Arctic from the North Atlantic to the Bering Strait, they met only one people, the Eskimos, or Inuit as they are now called in Canada. Today, over 90 per cent of Canada's Inuit live in the Arctic.

The Arctic is commonly defined as the area in which the mean temperature of the warmest month (July) does not exceed 10°C. The boundary is roughly coincident with the tree line. The Arctic landscape in Canada includes the spectacular mountains and fiords of East Baffin and Ellesmere islands and northern Labrador, the rocks, lakes and streams of the Canadian shield in Arctic Quebec and the Northwest Territories (NWT) mainland, and the flat coastal plains of the Western Arctic.

Everywhere it is a landscape without trees. Vegetation ranges from the brushy willows along river valleys on the mainland, to the lichens and mosses of the barren lands, the polar desert of the upland plains and mountains of the Arctic islands.

Winters are long and cold, made more bitter by intense winds in a landscape that offers little shelter. The Arctic seas are frozen over much of the year and, even though the ice begins to break up in June, remnants may persist and be blown back to shore late into the summer.



An *Inukshuk*, or stone marker, on the tundra near Cape Dorset (Jimmy Manning)

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.

Origin of the Inuit

The ancestors of the Inuit entered the Canadian North nearly 4 000 years ago from Alaska. These early Inuit, who are properly called Paleoeskimos, brought with them a culture already adapted to the Arctic. Their tools were made of bone, ivory and flint. They probably wore sewn clothing of caribou and seal skins, lived in tents made of skin and stone, and in skin winter houses. They were able to hunt most of the land and sea mammal species they encountered.

These first Canadian Inuit lived across the North from about 2000 BC until about AD 1000.

While much of what we see in Paleoeskimo culture appears to have arisen internally, the last Canadian Inuit prehistoric stage, the Thule culture (AD 1000-1400), clearly was the result of a new wave of migration from northern Alaska. Thule hunters appeared at a time



Artist Henry Evaluardjuk of Frobisher Bay, works on a sculpture of a hunter being attacked by a bear (George Hunter)

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.

In winter, they would congregate in temporary villages which co-operated in seal and polar bear hunting, and in which meat was shared widely. In summer, the village would separate into groups of two or three households which travelled widely in search of fish, birds, caribou, and seals, to reform into larger units in autumn to intercept migrating schools of fish and herds of caribou.

The spiritual life of pre-contact Inuit was strongly animistic and individual. Angaguk were the human focus of much of this animistic power, but each individual had intense connections to the Inuit spiritual world, as is shown by their personal amulets and decorated tools.

Of all the human races and cultures, the Inuit were, and still are, the quintessential hunters. Many hunting and gathering societies throughout the world have been described by anthropologists, but in most, hunting was only a part of a larger round of activity that included gathering, herding, and horticulture. None of these groups relied so exclusively on hunting as did the Inuit. None obtained so great a proportion of its daily needs – food, clothing, shelter and heat – from fish and wildlife as did the Inuit. Few of these other foraging societies maintained their economy and society with so little external modification, and so recently in time, as did the Inuit.

European explorers

Inuit were encountered by the earliest European explorers of what is now Canada, but sustained contact between the two peoples did not begin until the early nineteenth century. The attraction of the Canadian Arctic to European (almost exclusively British) expeditions was twofold: the Northwest Passage and the whale fishery. The search for the passage was spearheaded by the British Navy, beginning in earnest shortly after the Napoleonic wars, and culminating in the search for the Franklin expedition after 1845. The final discovery of the passage in 1851, however, led only to the conclusion that the route was of no commercial viability, and thus to a loss of interest in further exploration.

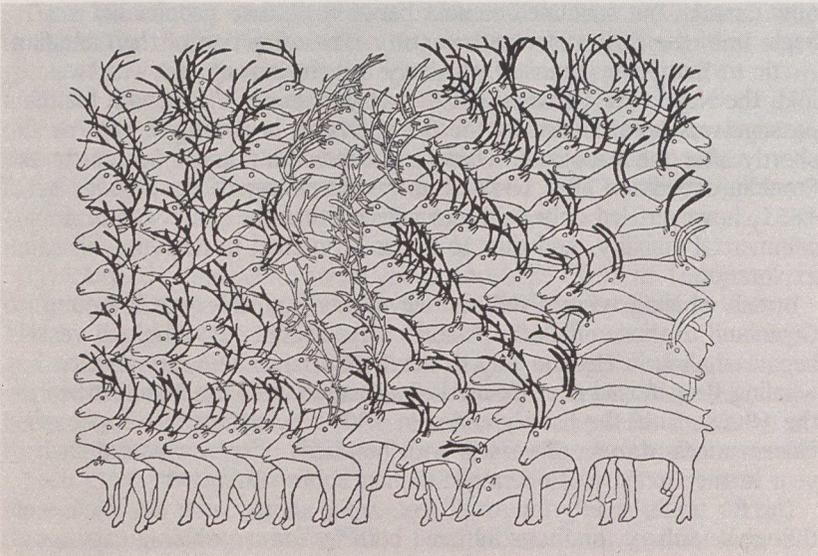
British whaling vessels shifted their efforts from the waters around Greenland to those off Baffin Island in the 1820s. New England vessels began whaling in Hudson Bay in the 1860s, and the San Francisco whaling fleet moved east from Alaskan waters into the Beaufort Sea in the 1890s. Until the fishery ended in 1906, owing to the collapse of baleen prices, dozens of vessels with hundreds of men wintered each year in the Arctic, and operated summer shore stations there.

The fur trade, chiefly for Arctic fox, arose shortly after the decline of the whale fishery, and was initiated both by former whaling captains who had traded incidentally with the Inuit, and by the Hudson's Bay Company. During the 1920s and 1930s, hundreds of fur trade posts

were established all across the Arctic. It was only at that time that sustained contact was finally established with the most isolated Inuit bands of the Central Arctic.

Although a few Inuit were from time to time taken to Europe by explorers and whalers as curiosities, the Inuit as a whole remained isolated from European and North American society until comparatively recently. As late as 1950, the Inuit of Canada continued to live in small hunting camps scattered across the Arctic, entirely dependent on fish and game, and on the limited range of goods their furs brought in trade. Few Inuit spoke any language other than their own. Few had more than two or three grades of schooling and many none at all. Consequently few were aware of, much less participated effectively in, the political, economic, and social life of Canada as a whole. There are Inuit still alive today who in their childhood never saw an outsider, and who well into their adulthood knew only fur traders, missionaries and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. By the same token, southern Canadians remained largely ignorant of the Inuit.

The major forces of change and modernization began with the establishment of military bases in the Arctic during the Second World War and the subsequent Cold War period, and establishment by the federal government of health, educational, and administrative facilities throughout the Arctic, beginning in the 1950s. Gradually, these developments introduced the Inuit to schooling, health care, paid employment, and



Hundreds and Hundreds, Herds of Caribou (print by Ruth Qualluaryuk)

the social welfare provisions Canada was then implementing for all its citizens.

Within two decades, tuberculosis and other epidemic diseases were largely eradicated, and infant mortality substantially reduced, owing not only to the establishment of a public health system in the North but also to the improvement of housing conditions. The provision of these services had important effects on Inuit demography: first to increase the population, and second to centralize it in the 50 or so communities in which most Inuit now reside. Dozens of traditional village sites and hunting camps fell into disuse, or were occupied only for short periods.

[The following text is extremely faint and largely illegible due to bleed-through from the reverse side of the page. It appears to be a continuation of the demographic and social analysis.]

Year	Population	Urban	Rural
1950	25,300	100%	0%
1960	40,000	100%	0%

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Canada.

Demography and Health

There were 25 390 Inuit in Canada in 1981 (the latest figure available), about a quarter of the world's Inuit population. The rest live in Greenland (Denmark) and Alaska (USA), and the eastern tip of Siberia (USSR). The Table shown indicates the distribution of Inuit in Canada in 1981.

About 90 per cent of Canada's Inuit reside in the Arctic, in about 53 small communities from the Mackenzie Delta in the west to Labrador in the east. Most were established as fur trade posts, a few as military air bases or warning stations, and a few as modern administrative centres, to which the Inuit gravitated during the 1950s and 1960s. All but nine have fewer than 1 000 residents, and in all but ten Inuit account for over 75 per cent of the population. Frobisher Bay was the only Canadian community with over 1 000 Inuit in 1981; it has recently been joined by Eskimo Point. The non-Inuit population of the Arctic region of the NWT (excluding the Mackenzie Delta communities of Inuvik and Aklavik) was a mere 2 330. The Inuit thus constitute 86 per cent of the population of that region.

Inuit residing in southern Canada are heavily concentrated in Ottawa, the national capital, where they are employed chiefly by federal government agencies and by national Inuit organizations.

Distribution of Inuit in Canada, 1981

Province or Territory	Number of Inuit	% of Inuit	Communities with over 75% Inuit	Communities with 20-75% Inuit
Northwest Territories	15 910	62.7	29	4
Arctic Quebec	4 575	18.0	11	2
Labrador	1 495	5.9	0	3
Rest of Canada	3 410	13.4	0	0
Total	25 390	100.0	40	9

Source: Robitaille & Choinière, Census of Canada

Although many Inuit have visited southern Canada for training, employment, health care, business, conferences, or to visit family or friends, few choose to remain for any length of time. Some Inuit have migrated within the North to regional centres but most continue to live in their community of birth.

In 1951, there were just under 10 000 Inuit in Canada. The two-and-a-half-fold increase in the following 30 years was accounted for entirely by natural increase rather than immigration. During that time, life expectancy at birth has risen from about 37 years to about 65. Birth rates peaked around 1960, and death rates have steadily fallen. The result is an extremely youthful population: in 1981, 43 per cent of Inuit were under 15 years of age, compared with 23 per cent of the Canadian population as a whole. Northern Inuit families typically have about three children, more than double the national average.

These demographic statistics are closely related to the decline in infant mortality rates and in the incidence of infectious disease, circumstances commonly associated with poor environmental conditions and low standards of health care. In the NWT, infant mortality has declined from rates as high as 200 per 1 000 in the 1950s, to about 100 in the late 1960s, to a range of 20 to 40 since 1975. New cases of tuberculosis declined from over 100 in 1968 to 5 in 1983. This progress may be attributed to the vast improvement in housing, water, and sewage standards, to the establishment of permanently staffed nursing stations in all but the tiniest communities, and to improved awareness and standards of public health, which have all occurred since the 1960s. All of the above-noted rates, however, remain significantly above national averages, indicating that improvements are still required.

Modernization has, however, brought new health problems to the Inuit. As carbohydrates (and especially sugar) have increased in the diet, as the breast feeding of infants has declined, and as the Inuit have become more sedentary, the incidence of obesity, tooth decay, ear problems, and heart disease, has risen. As well, problems of alcohol and drug abuse, and higher incidences of mental health problems and social pathologies are related to the stress of rapid social change.

Life in a Modern Inuit Community

The initial impression of a visitor to a modern Inuit community might well be disappointment. There are no skin boats, no snow houses, no soapstone lamps and no one is wearing caribou skin clothing. There are very few sled dogs. There is no small white clapboard, red-roofed trading post. Instead, there are rows and rows of small, frame houses, connected by streets, power lines, and utility corridors, and illuminated by street lamps. Gasoline-powered vehicles are everywhere: snow-mobiles, three-wheelers, cars, light trucks, metal boats with outboard engines. There is a large, modern school building, a nursing station, a grocery and general store, a small power house, garages for trucks and heavy equipment, a number of modest offices housing municipal and territorial agencies along with local community organizations, a satellite receiving dish and an airstrip.

This community looks rather like many other small rural towns in southern Canada. True, there are no trees, lawns, gardens, or pavement, and there are no fences or other demarcation between the houses. But there are children going to school, men and women going about their work in offices and shops, driving trucks, repairing equipment, collecting the garbage, and sitting in the coffee shop. The casual



Mother and child at Grise Fiord (Jamie Flaherty)

visitor might conclude that Inuit, except for living in a cold climate and wearing unusual styles of winter clothing, have become thoroughly assimilated by Canadian society and no longer have a distinctive economy, society, and culture.

Yet every Inuit community, from the largest to the smallest, is joined by close attachment to its environment. In every community, the beach front is lined with small motorized canoes for summer hunting and travel, while in winter, snowmobiles, towing long sleds, can be seen leaving town before daylight to put in a full day of hunting. The office and service people, when their work day is complete, often spend their after hours in traditional tasks, the men hunting for a few hours for seals, and the women sewing skin boots, or *kamik*, and preparing traditional foods.

Snowmobiles, sleds, drying seal, caribou and polar bear skins, and racks of meat are to be seen near every home, along with the artifacts and tools of a people who live close to their land. An absent snowmobile and sled is a clear sign that the men of the house are away hunting. When the weather is clear, even if cold and dark, some men may make hunting trips lasting for several weeks and covering a thousand kilometres.

The interior of an Inuit home often shows the mixture that makes up every-day life. There will be an electric stove and refrigerator, a television or stereo set, a wall rack with four or five rifles and shotguns, a seal skin being prepared so that waterproof boots can be made, children's drawings hung on the wall, and parts for an engine that is being repaired by the owner. Adults and children take their meals as they wish, eating protein-rich seal meat or fish, vegetables from the store, and bread or biscuits.

Summer days

In summer, when the sea is ice-free and children are on their summer holidays, entire families will move away from the town to live in tents on the land maybe as much as 300 km away. If the man must work, the summer camp will be placed only 15 or 20 km away so that he can commute to his job. If there is no need to be close at hand, then families may move by boat as much as 300 km and live away from town for several months.

Unlike the winter rhythm of the community, summer camp allows each person to keep his or her own time. For the men, this often means travelling out to hunt at night when it is cooler and more comfortable, and when, with the long daylight, animals are active. For the children, summer camp is a time to play, pick berries, begin to learn the skills of their parents, and indeed, to become Inuit.

Each family lives in a homemade canvas tent large enough to accommodate as many as ten people. Cooking is done on a camp stove, clothes are washed, food prepared, equipment repaired, and people sleep on a thick bed of foam and caribou skin mattresses — often all at one time. The always active children run in and out of each tent in their play and eat and sleep where and when it pleases them.

From May to September, clusters of two to ten families can be found camping along the sea coasts near each Inuit village. And while summer provides the opportunity of a holiday from the more crowded towns, it is also the time when men and women turn their attention to the opportunities to capture those animals which only come North for a few months, or even weeks, of summer. In groups of two or three, men will set off walking 50 to 100 km inland to seek caribou, or travel in several boats in search of small whales or walrus — animals absent from the Arctic for nine or more months each year. And it is at this time that teenage boys begin their first serious training as hunters.

By the end of summer, large supplies of meat and fish have been prepared or already sent back by canoe to the towns so that all Inuit — worker and hunter, young and old — can receive a portion. By the end of September, the winter pace of each Inuit community begins again as the sea starts to freeze and the snow covers the land. For the first time in three months, nearly all the residents are again in town, returning to their regular employment, and preparing for winter seal hunting and trapping.

Winter activities

Community and family winter activities are centred in the settlements and hamlets in which Inuit have resided since the 1960s. The adults who earn wages follow a work day much like that of people in southern Canada. The one notable difference is that, while southerners travel to work by car or public transport, Inuit walk or drive snowmobiles.

The end of summer means a new routine for village children, too. Each Inuit community has its own school and provides a curriculum from kindergarten up to middle secondary. In some cases, students receive training in their own language, *Inuktitut*, in the early grades.

Village residents who are neither workers nor students spend their days in more traditional activities. For the men, this means preparing their snowmobiles and sleds for a day of hunting. Only the worst, windiest days prevent hunting. Once each man has made his preparations — packing rifles, stove, spare clothing, and extra fuel — the hunters set off alone or in pairs to hunt ringed seals within a day's journey of the town. For longer trips, in search of caribou or polar bear, as many as five hunters will form a party and carry with them enough fuel and equipment to be self-sufficient for several weeks.



Typical village transportation: Inuit family on snowmobile in Pangnirtung (George Hunter)

In winter, the hunting day, even for seals, is long and hard. Usually, the men are packed for travel by 8 a.m. which, in midwinter, can be as much as three hours before sunlight. At the ice-hunting area, after a few hours of driving, a man will locate the small breathing holes, called *agluit*, which seals keep open to reach the open air. When an *aglu* is found, the hunter will wait motionless for up to an hour to shoot and harpoon a rising seal. Only one of every three or four waits yields a seal, but even one seal will mean 30 kg of meat for the community. The only distraction from the hunt comes when two or three hunters meet and pause long enough to prepare a kettle of hot tea. Finally, after eight or ten hours of active hunting, a man will begin the return journey to his home, possibly with one or two seals lashed atop his sled.

Women, during the long winter, rise early with the men. They prepare food, dress and feed the school-age children, and, after the hunters and pupils have left the house, the women begin their own day. Much of their time is spent working co-operatively with other female relatives, sharing the care of infants, cleaning and stretching skins, sewing parkas, mittens, and boots from cloth and seal or caribou skins, and shopping at the village co-operative or Hudson's Bay

store. The daily gatherings usually take place in the home of a woman's mother or older sister.

In the evening, Inuit families and entire communities have time for each other. Often, several families will gather at the home of a community elder to share some of the meat caught during the day's hunt. At these times, men and women talk about the events of the day. For the teenagers and older children, the evening is a time to visit the local snack shop or return to school, which is now open as a community centre, to play volleyball and other team sports. Even in winter, girls and boys play outside, riding bicycles over the hardpacked snow, mind-ing younger children, or helping adults in their outdoor work, like stretching a seal skin or repairing a sled.

On Sunday, the village church becomes the focal point of the community, with Inuit attending services in the morning and afternoon. As well, the church hosts community feasts once or twice a month where seal, caribou, and other local foods are shared by all. It is from this strong sense of community sharing, as well as memories of their own hunger in times not long past, that the Inuit in Canada adopted Ethiopian famine relief as their own cause, donating nearly \$100 000 in the last two years.

Today, each Inuit community is experiencing rapid change while sticking to many traditional ways. School children aspire to be dentists and nurses, mothers produce works of art known world-wide, men produce, through hunting, the food that links Inuit to their land and to their past. And all Inuit see this mixture as the key to their future.

Economic Life

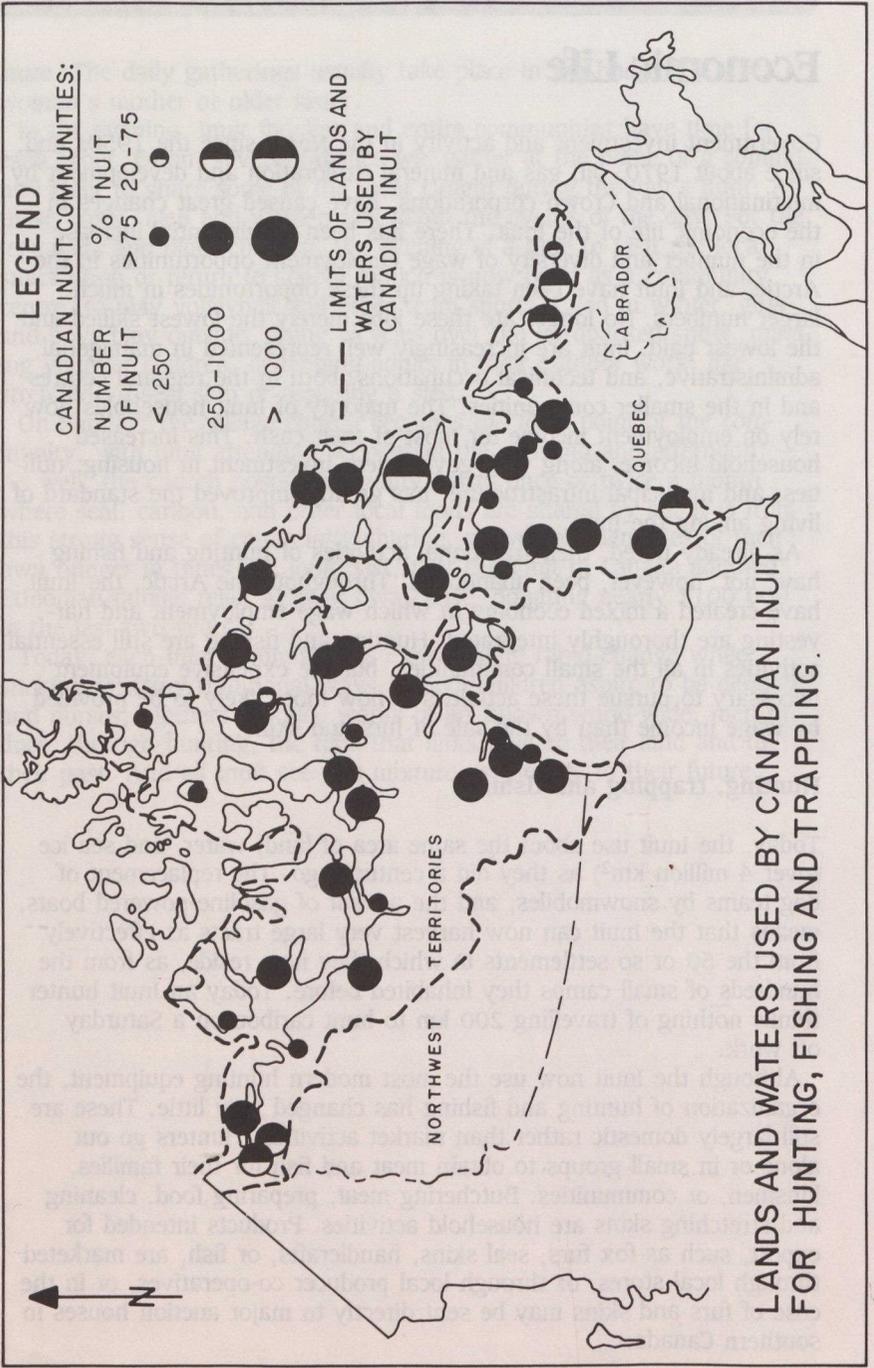
Government investment and activity in the North since the 1950s and, since about 1970, oil, gas and mineral exploration and development by multinational and Crown corporations, have caused great changes in the economic life of the Inuit. There has been a substantial increase in the number and diversity of wage employment opportunities in the Arctic, and Inuit have been taking up these opportunities in much larger numbers. No longer are these jobs merely the lowest skilled and the lowest paid. Inuit are increasingly well represented in managerial, administrative, and technical occupations, both in the regional centres and in the smaller communities. The majority of Inuit households now rely on employment income for most of their cash. This increased household income, along with government investment in housing, utilities, and municipal infrastructure, has greatly improved the standard of living among the Inuit.

As already noted, their traditional activities of hunting and fishing have not, however, been abandoned. Throughout the Arctic, the Inuit have created a mixed economy in which wage employment and harvesting are thoroughly integrated. Hunting and fishing are still essential activities in all the small communities, but the expensive equipment necessary to pursue these activities is now more likely to be provided by wage income than by the sale of furs and skins.

Hunting, trapping and fishing

Today, the Inuit use about the same area of land, water, and sea ice (over 4 million km²) as they did a century ago. The replacement of dog teams by snowmobiles, and the advent of gasoline-powered boats, means that the Inuit can now harvest very large tracts as effectively from the 50 or so settlements in which they now reside, as from the hundreds of small camps they inhabited before. Today an Inuit hunter thinks nothing of travelling 200 km to hunt caribou on a Saturday off work.

Although the Inuit now use the most modern hunting equipment, the organization of hunting and fishing has changed very little. These are still largely domestic rather than market activities. Hunters go out alone or in small groups to obtain meat and fish for their families, kinsmen, or communities. Butchering meat, preparing food, cleaning and stretching skins are household activities. Products intended for export, such as fox furs, seal skins, handicrafts, or fish, are marketed through local stores, or through local producer co-operatives, or in the case of furs and skins may be sent directly to major auction houses in southern Canada.

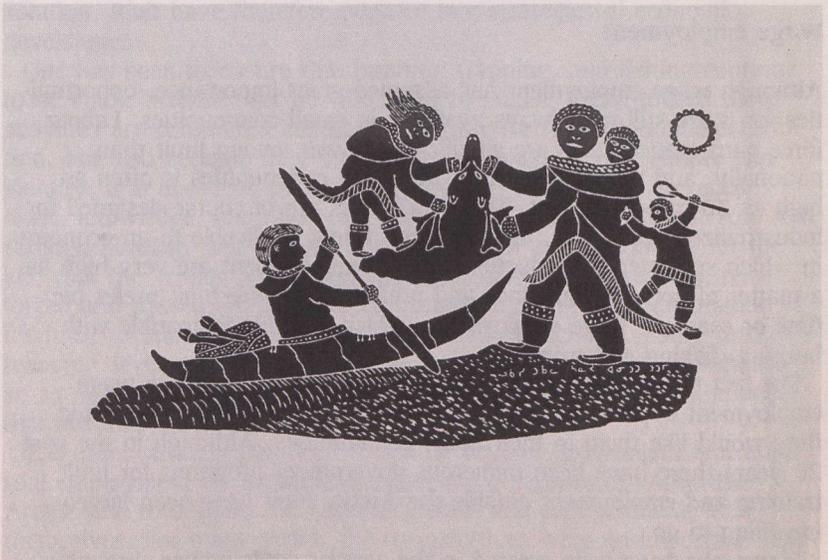


Map of Inuit communities and lands

Each household purchases and maintains its own productive equipment such as snowmobiles, outboards, rifles, fish nets, and small boats, which typically cost thousands of dollars each year to buy, maintain and operate. Inuit have always been quick to adopt new harvesting technology, not only to make their livelihoods more secure, but to reduce the time required for harvesting.

According to recent surveys, annual *per capita* production of meat and fish from the land averages over 200 kg, nearly double the national per capita consumption of these products. The Inuit population is thus essentially self-sufficient in protein, which constitutes a large part of the diet. At the same time, these harvest levels are generally well within the conservation limits of the major species of fish and wildlife. On a replacement basis, this production is valued at a minimum of \$1 000 per capita.

Replacement, however, would not be an easy matter. Seal meat, caribou meat, and fish have been shown to be excellent sources of certain minerals and vitamins, as well as being very high-quality protein. These would not be replaced by importing beef, pork, and chicken from southern Canada, and in any event the small quantities of these meats available in the isolated northern stores are, after transport and storage, no longer of the highest quality, irrespective of price. Any substantial reduction in the consumption of country food by Inuit would be a detriment to public health standards. In any event, Inuit generally



Caribou hunting by kayak (print by Lucassie Tookalak and Rebecca Qumaluk)

consider imported meat a poor substitute, and much prefer the food they obtain for themselves from the land.

Because hunting, trapping and fishing are household activities, there is no clear separation between subsistence and commercial production. The same equipment and skills are generally required for both, and both may occur at the same time. For example, people hunt for food when they are on the trapline, or indeed travelling for any purpose on the land.

Seals in particular are a source of both food and cash: one adult ringed seal might yield 30 kg of meat for home consumption as well as a skin for sale. Consequently, hunting and fishing continue without reference to the commercial market. However, for those families and communities which have little access to wage employment, the cash from commercial production is essential to continue hunting and fishing for food.

It is for this reason that the drastic fall in seal prices because of consumer boycotts in Europe has had such a devastating effect on the Inuit communities of the Eastern Arctic, which are especially dependent on seals. Many families have been forced onto welfare, and many are unable any longer to afford even the gasoline and ammunition necessary to hunt for their own food. It is ironic and unfortunate that Inuit, who hunt adult seals and kill them instantly with high-powered rifles, were no less affected by these boycotts than were the commercial, industrial sealers in the North Atlantic.

Wage employment

Although wage employment has assumed great importance, opportunities for it are still not always available in small communities. Labour force participation rates are significantly lower among Inuit than nationally, and unemployment in the small communities is often as high as 30 to 50 per cent. These indicators are of course designed for industrialized economies, and are not entirely applicable to an economy in which subsistence production and self-employment are very high as a matter of both circumstance and preference. Many Inuit prefer part-time or seasonal wage employment, which is more compatible with hunting, fishing and trapping.

The fact remains, however, that the Inuit would like more wage employment opportunities in a greater diversity of occupations, and they would like them in their home communities. Although in the past 20 years there have been numerous government programs for Inuit training and employment outside the Arctic, Inuit have been largely unwilling to go.

Many jobs have been created in the smaller communities through government capital and operating expenditures, through the development

of local co-operatives and small businesses, and through the growth of local municipal and political institutions. An increasing proportion of these jobs are being filled by Inuit, as their familiarity with southern education and job experience increases. As well, many jobs have been created in the Arctic by oil, gas, and mineral exploration and development. The co-operative efforts of government and private industry have resulted in technical and administrative training programs for numerous Inuit, and in good years, the provision of hundreds of jobs, many of which are seasonal.

Employment on drill-rigs and in exploration camps has generally been on a rotational basis, with employees being flown in from their home communities to work continuously for two or three weeks, and then being given a week or two off at home. There are two operating mines in the Arctic, and several dozen Inuit are employed in them and have their families at the mine sites. As a rule, Inuit men have taken on the manual work, and Inuit women the office jobs.

Economic development

Although major resource development projects in the Arctic have provided jobs and training for many Inuit, they alone cannot be the solution to the Inuit employment problem because there cannot possibly be mines and oil wells close to all 50 or so Inuit communities. Nor can government and service employment in these communities be the sole solution. Inuit have therefore pursued two strategies of economic development.

One has been to ensure that hunting, trapping, and fishing continue to be viable activities for all who want to pursue them. Indeed these activities are considered important not only for their economic contribution, but also because they are intimately linked to Inuit culture and identity. It is above all through hunting that Inuit expect to teach skills, knowledge, and appropriate behaviour to their children. And it is through hunting, and through the preparation and distribution of the kill, that the virtues of co-operation, patience, and sharing are reinforced and passed on. It is indeed because hunting is an affirmation of life itself to Inuit that they have consistently sought to ensure that all resource development activity in the Arctic is conducted and regulated so as not to jeopardize fish and animal life there, or the environment that sustains that life.

The other strategy has been to search beyond government and industrial employment for sustainable economic development within the Arctic, and to develop the necessary skills and ability among Inuit themselves. For many years, the co-operatives were an important vehicle for doing this. The first Inuit co-operative was established with federal government assistance in 1959. Practically every Inuit community

now has a co-operative, although there is much variation in what each does. Some are retail co-ops, some are producer co-ops (for crafts, carvings, and fish), some are co-operative enterprises in tourism, construction, or the provision of municipal services. Inuit co-operatives now do over \$30 million in business every year and are linked through a co-operative federation.

More recently, Inuit have become involved in private business at both the regional and individual levels. There are three major regional development corporations: Inuvialuit Development Corporation (IDC) in the Western Arctic, Nunasi Corporation in the remainder of the Northwest Territories, and Makivik Corporation in Quebec. These were initially funded by cash compensation from land claims settlements or by commercial loans. Each corporation has emphasized the development of Inuit business skills, and has tried to invest its funds to ensure both the adequate growth of its assets and the creation of jobs and enterprises in the North. For example, IDC has invested in a local airline, a taxi company, a country food store, and a sport hunter guiding operation, and is considering joint ventures with major oil companies on Inuvialuit lands; Nunasi has invested in real estate in northern communities, and a pilot project to design and manufacture a snowmobile suited to Arctic conditions, and is also a partner in a gold mine on the barren-lands; Makivik has controlled a local airline, a fishery, and a construction company.

A number of Inuit have established their own businesses in recent years, often based on the skills and experiences gained through involvement in co-operatives and development corporations. In Tuktoyaktuk, some of the oil companies encourage Inuit to establish service and contracting businesses in support of the industry. The typical local Inuit enterprise is in retailing, construction or transport.

Education and training

Education and training are still major requirements for the development of an Inuit population capable of implementing the development they seek. Schools in virtually every Inuit community provide education up to grade 9. There are, however, only four high schools in the entire Arctic; unfortunately, most Inuit children do not continue their schooling beyond grade 9, chiefly because of the necessity of moving far away from home. Of Inuit 15 years of age and over in 1981, fewer than 40 per cent had completed grade 9, and fewer than 20 per cent had graduated from high school. Very few Inuit go on to post-secondary education, and one result is that Inuit are under-represented in the professions.

The lack of formal educational qualifications has led governments and Inuit organizations to co-operate in developing special training and

diploma courses in the North for young Inuit. For example, courses are offered in teaching, renewable resources technology, secretarial skills, trades and journalism.

Despite the intense pressures for economic and social change during the past generation, Inuit have not abandoned their traditional economy and their attachment to the land. Instead, they have sought to modernize it, and to incorporate it harmoniously into a new and distinctive economy that takes advantage of what modern developments from the south – both technical and organizational – have to offer.

Political Life

In addition to being Canadian citizens, the Inuit claim special rights as aboriginal peoples. Their leaders have stated to Parliament "the Aboriginal peoples of Canada interacted with Imperial representatives very much like 'nations' in the international sense. This status as 'nations' within Canada vests in us rights not held by others who later immigrated to Canada". Canada has dealt with claims of this kind to aboriginal rights by two political processes. Starting in 1973, the federal government agreed to negotiate settlements in areas like the Arctic where an aboriginal group has claimed that an aboriginal interest in the land, as demonstrated by continued use and occupancy, had not been extinguished. The second process was established in 1982 by the Constitution Act, which requires that a series of meetings of provincial premiers and the prime minister be held to define and clarify the meaning of "existing aboriginal rights" as recognized and affirmed by that Act. Both processes continue. As well, the federal government is committed, as a matter of policy, to greater self-government at the local and regional level for all native people.

Inuit claims agreements

Two Inuit groups have reached final agreement with the federal government over their aboriginal claims: the Inuit of northern Quebec (in 1975), and the Inuvialuit of the Western Arctic (in 1984). In the first case, the province of Quebec was a party to the agreement. Negotiations are under way in the case of the Inuit of Labrador, and the Inuit of the Northwest Territories not already included in the Western Arctic agreement.

These agreements are intended to provide various benefits in exchange for aboriginal land title, such as the following:

- surface title to large areas of land,
- sub-surface rights to a portion of the land selected,
- hunting, fishing, and trapping rights on remaining Crown land, and
- monetary compensation.

The claims agreements also provide for Inuit involvement in land and resource management. Federal claims policy is currently under review and the nature of benefits which may be negotiated may change.

Organizations and activity

The period of rapid social change in the Inuit homeland of northern Canada after the Second World War created tremendous stresses in Inuit life. Although Inuit are a population majority across one-third of

Canada's land area, their small numbers and their remoteness from centres of political power and decision-making left them and their unique way of life little understood by Canadian society.

To enable Inuit (and Canada's other aboriginal peoples) to bring their concerns before government, and to provide government with representative bodies for advice, the government of Canada from the beginning of the 1970s embarked on a policy of providing funds to regional and national Inuit organizations. These funds are used to maintain offices, conduct independent research, hold meetings, publish and broadcast views often critical of government policy, and develop collective objectives. These activities, which have served to focus the political aspirations of the Inuit, have led to the land claims process, the movement to create Inuit-run governments, and meetings with the Canadian prime minister and provincial premiers to renegotiate the Constitution itself in relation to Inuit interests.

The main national organization, Inuit Tapirisat ('Eskimo Brotherhood'), elects its president in a direct vote held in every Inuit community across northern Canada and among Inuit in the main urban concentrations (notably Ottawa) in the south. The annual general meeting of Inuit Tapirisat (to which delegates are elected in each community) serves as a clearing house for all the other national bodies to report and to receive direction. The Inuit Committee on National Issues deals specifically with work on the national Constitution. The Inuit Women's Association is a relatively new body devoted to promoting the social concerns of Inuit women and families through political and administrative reform, and through education and information in Inuit villages. Canadian Inuit also participate in the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, an international organization including the Inuit of Alaska and Greenland, to promote common environmental, human rights, cultural, and economic goals.

Another body, the Nunavut Constitutional Forum (NCF), has the objective of creating a separate territory in the Arctic portion of the NWT, in which the Inuit would be a majority. This new territory would be called Nunavut ('our land', in *Inuktitut*). NCF is developing through research, community meetings, and public information programs, the shape and style of the proposed new government. The movement to create a predominantly Inuit territory originated in the land claims movement, and is a powerful expression of Inuit political determination. The federal government has expressed support for the division of the Northwest Territories, subject to a mutually satisfactory agreement on boundaries between the two new territories.

Broadcasting and communications

A generation ago, television was unknown in the North, but radio, when the reception was good, might come from anywhere in North America or even abroad. There were local stations, with low transmitting power, only in Frobisher and Inuvik. With the advent of satellite transmission in the early 1970s, television became available in every community in the North. The programming, however, was entirely from the south. The Northern Service of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) made a modest beginning to fill this gap, as it had in radio broadcasting earlier, but the major initiative came from Inuit organizations themselves. After a successful pilot project in the late 1970s, the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation was established in 1981, with representation from all regional Inuit organizations. Headquartered in Ottawa, it now has production facilities in Frobisher Bay, Igloolik, Baker Lake, Eskimo Point, and Cambridge Bay, which regularly provide five and a half hours of programming weekly in Inuktitut, chiefly on public affairs, cultural heritage, and educational programming for children. Programs are transmitted to nearly all Inuit communities by satellite via the CBC network.



Learning the techniques of broadcasting (Inuit Broadcasting Corporation)

Art and folk crafts

To outsiders, the best-known expressions of Inuit arts and crafts are soapstone sculptures and prints. Both of these, however, are of recent origin, although Inuit have made carvings and etchings in ivory, stone, and antler since Paleoeskimo times.

Today, carving and print-making from cut stone blocks are the work of specialized artisans living in communities like Povungnituk, Baker Lake, Holman Island, and Cape Dorset. As well, Inuit designed and manufactured parkas have become a frequent sight on the streets of southern Canadian cities.

The ivory, bone, and stone sculpture exported to southern galleries began with Inuit preparing small craft items for trade to European and American whalers. Over a century has passed since this began, and Inuit sculptors have developed new media of expression, such as print-making and appliqué embroidering on felt.

Inuit music includes traditional drum dancing in the Central Arctic, throat-singing on the Hudson Bay coasts as well as the fiddle music and reel dances borrowed from the Scots whalers and traders, and folk singing, such as that of Charlie Panagoniak who mixes traditional stories, modern politics and contemporary rock music. There is even an Inuit heavy metal band which performed to enthralled southern audiences at Vancouver's Expo 86.



Untitled (wall hanging in duffel, felt, embroidery by Victoria Mamnguqsualuk)

Inuit in Canadian Society

Inuit are one of the most readily identified minorities in the world thanks to images of the snow-house or *iglu*, the fur parka, the long winter periods of darkness, and the great white expanses of snow and ice. These clichés are as prevalent in Canada as abroad, and many Inuit resent them as well as the more recent image of the "smiling Eskimo". While southern Canadians are proud of Inuit sculpture and graphics, which are the most readily identified Canadian artworks internationally, and although they often choose Inuit words for domestic and international public use as Canadian symbols, Inuit society and culture remain little known or understood. The fact is that Inuit language and culture are extremely different from any others in Canada, and they are accessible only to a very few outsiders who take the time and have the patience necessary to know them.

The intrusion of industrial society and the social welfare state into an ancient society has forced Inuit to respond in unaccustomed ways. A young publicly schooled corps of politicians and spokespersons has replaced the traditional leadership of elders, at least in representing the Inuit to the outside world. The Inuit leadership has won high praise from governments and others for its practical, moderate, and unsentimental style, and its ability to reach agreements on problems and grievances. On the other hand, the Inuit traditions of unwillingness to confront overtly, and belief that a mature person always compromises, have left them vulnerable at times to outsiders, including governments, who want to drive a hard bargain.

The costs of change have been high. Despite significant material advantages ultimately gained through public programs for health, housing, and social assistance, there have been many adverse effects on child care, family fabric, mental health, and nutrition, especially through the ravages of alcohol and drug abuse. The disruption of the old social and leadership structure, with the move from scattered camps to concentrated bungalow villages, and the overturning of old roles and duties, has left Inuit society disoriented at a moment of great stress.

It is hoped that restoring control to Inuit through new institutions will re-establish stability. While very few Inuit want to return to the old life with its material hardships, many long for its social and cultural values. The question facing Inuit today is what their culture means and how it can be realized and strengthened socially in the face of an unceasing tide of alien material change, fads, and values.

For Canadians generally, the Inuit are a source of romantic pride. They have given Canada a model of stoic courage and enduring calm in

the face of hardship. They have demonstrated that even the most forbidding environment can be a warm and loved home. They have provided fresh, easily recognized, and distinctive art-forms. And now they are taking Canadian political convention in unforeseen directions, giving new meaning to the flexibility and openness of what had seemed to some an outworn institutional structure. The greatest influence, and their hope for the future, is yet to come: that of a unique, self-governing, cultural community.

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