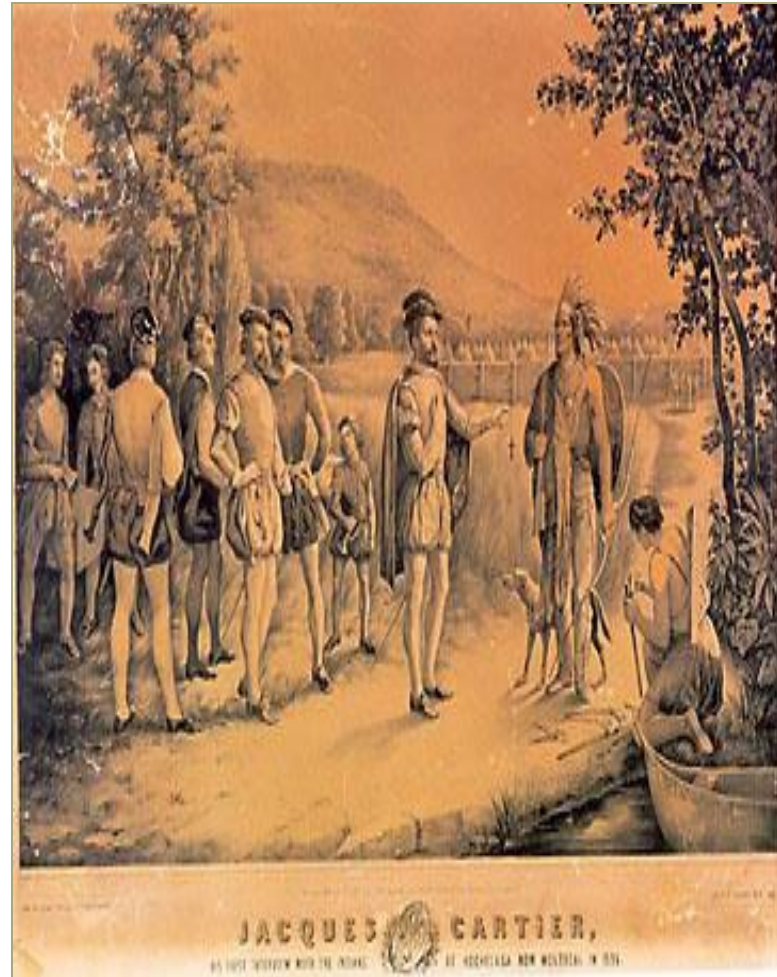


First Nations Unit

- This unit looks at the First Nations people of the Americas **prior to the arrival of the Europeans**
- When the Europeans arrived in the late 15th century, they discovered a diverse population of Aboriginal inhabitants
- To the Europeans, these inhabitants were an inferior, child-like and beast-like race that needed to be conquered, subdued and assimilated
- Though not as sophisticated as the technologically advanced Europeans, they did possess many gifts that were largely ignored by the Europeans
- They lived in harmony with nature, cleverly adapting to the land, taking only what they needed
- Hence the land they lived on was as pristine as it had been when they arrived thousands of years before



The Inuit of the Arctic



The Iroquois of the Eastern Woodlands



Peoples of the Plains



Peoples of the Plateau



Peoples of the Northwest Coast

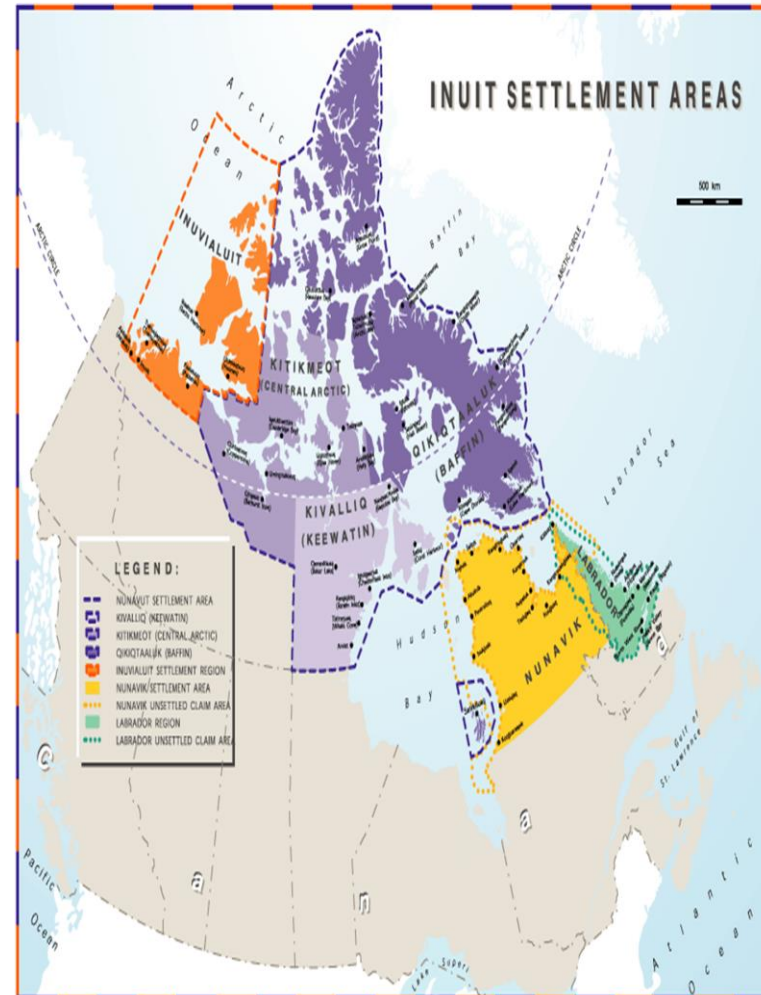


The Micmac and Beothuk



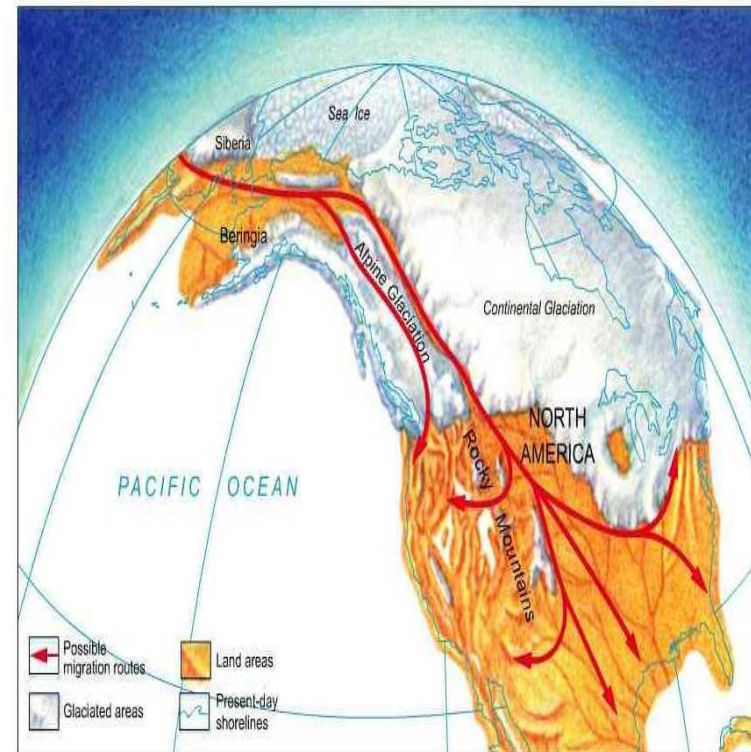
Inuit

- The **Inuit** are the most northerly of the First Nations peoples
- Hence they live in the harshest climate of all
- Their ancestry traces back thousands of years
- It is believed that they and other first nations peoples may be of **Asiatic stock**, having crossed the **Alaska-Siberian Land Bridge** about 20 000 years ago



Beringia

- The Alaska-Siberian Land bridge is referred to by historians as **Beringia**
- During the last Ice Age the sea level was much lower, much of the Earth's water was locked up in a great sheet of ice
- Hence a land bridge about a 1600 km in length, joined the two continents
- It is believed that the First Nations people may have crossed this bridge thousands of years ago
- These primitive people did not know that they were entering a new continent
- They were just following a food trail – hunting and gathering along the way
- Over thousand of years they dispersed throughout the North and South American continent



Routes of the First Americans



Coastal Inuit

- The Inuit were comprised of two different groups
- The **Coastal Inuit** who lived on the Arctic Coast, hunting seal, walrus, and whale



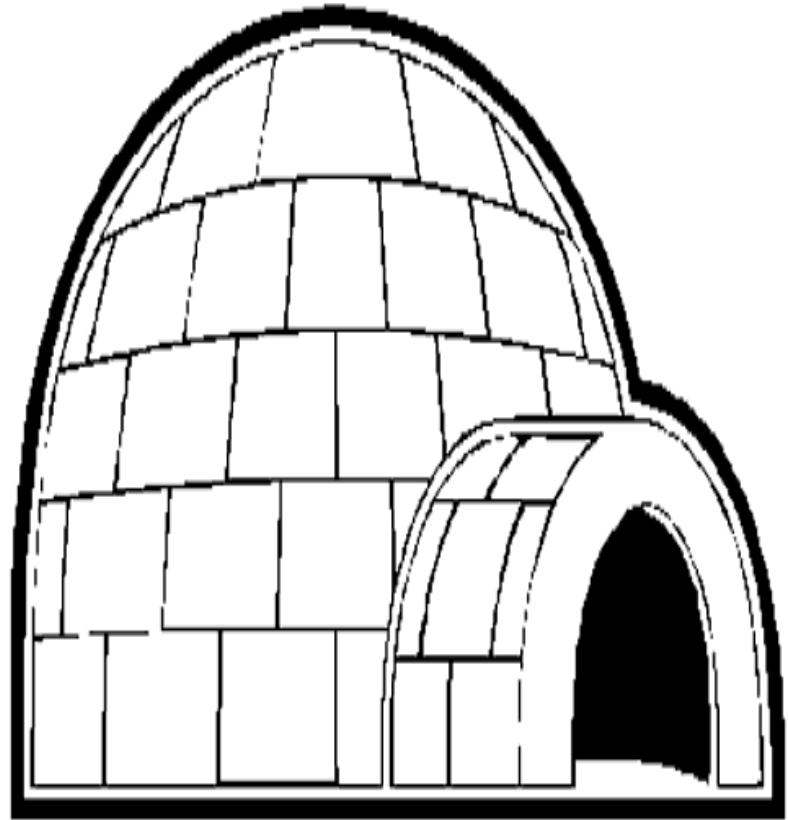
Inland Inuit

- And the **Inland or Interior Inuit** who lived off the coast, further inland
- They hunted caribou and musk ox
- Both Coastal and Inland Inuit developed a vital trading relationship
- Both had what the other needed: **seal** and **caribou** to survive



Iglus or Igloos

- In the winter, the Inuit lived in **Iglus** or **Igloos** which are semi-circular dome-shaped structures made of ice and snow
- An iglu could be built by two Inuit with long knives in a couple of hours
- Iglus are surprising warm and sheltered
- The use of a seal oil lamp further helped to warm the occupants



Inuit Tents

- In the short summer the Inuit would live in **tents**
- The frame would be made of whale bone and wood
- Sealskins would be sewn together and then draped over the frame
- Large stones were used to secure the structure
- There would be an entryway flap and a hole up top for smoke from a hearth to disperse



Clothing

- Their clothing was made primarily of **caribou** and **seal skin**
- Caribou hair is hollow and is an excellent insulator
- They wore two layers: One facing inward, the other outward with an air-trapping barrier in between
- In the summer they would discard one of the layers
- They also wore double seal skin boots and mittens made of caribou hide



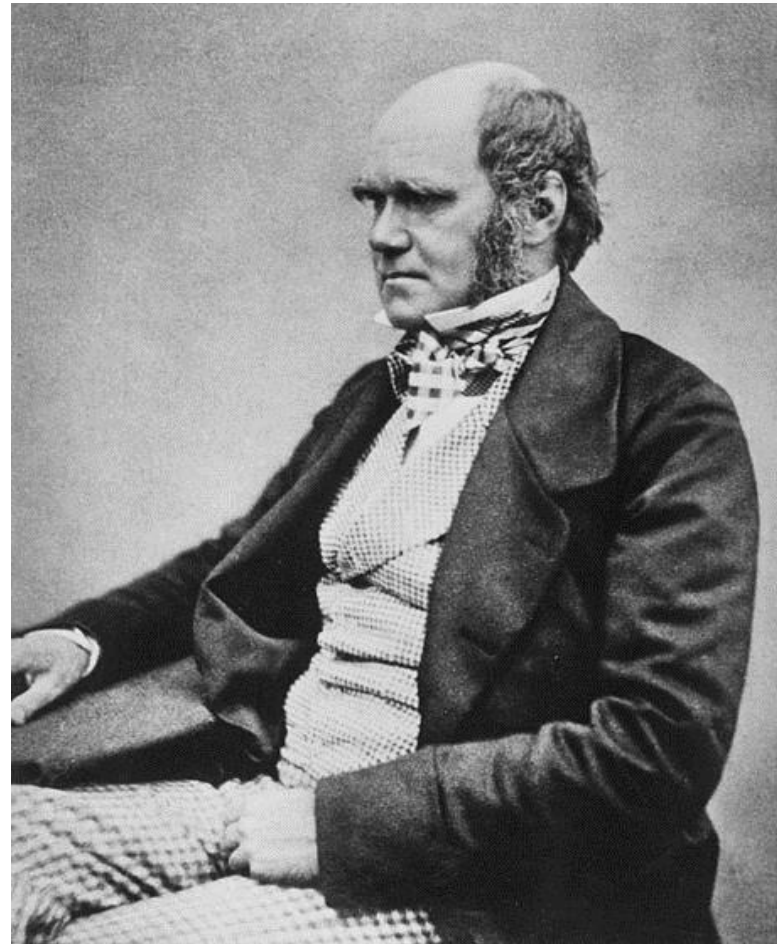
Diet

- Their diet was almost exclusively meat, supplemented with eggs, birds, and fish
- They lived predominantly on caribou, seal, and fish
- Walrus, musk-ox, and whale were also hunted
- Every scrap of the animal was used – skin for clothing, bone for tools, and flesh for food
- Seal blubber provided energy and protein
- And because of a lack of fuel, most meat was **eaten raw**



Eating Raw Meat?

- Which begs the question as to why they did not get sick by eating raw meat?
- The famous naturalist **Charles Darwin** answers this question in his famous study the “**Origins of Species**”
- He stated that: “**A species, over time, will adapt to the environment they live in**”
- Over generations the Inuit **people had developed enzymes** in their stomach which allowed them to eat raw meat without getting sick



Hunting the Caribou

- For the Inland Inuit, the caribou hunt was of critical importance
- Caribou follow certain migrational patterns
- Hence the Inuit would establish lines of **Inukshuk** and drive caribou toward them
- Hunters would hide in shallow pits nearby and attack the herd



Caribou – the all purpose animal

- For the Inuit the caribou were a vital part of their survival
- A successful hunt might bring in a year's supply
- All parts of the animal were used:
- The hides for clothes
- The bones and antlers for tools
- The sinew and intestines for rope and cord



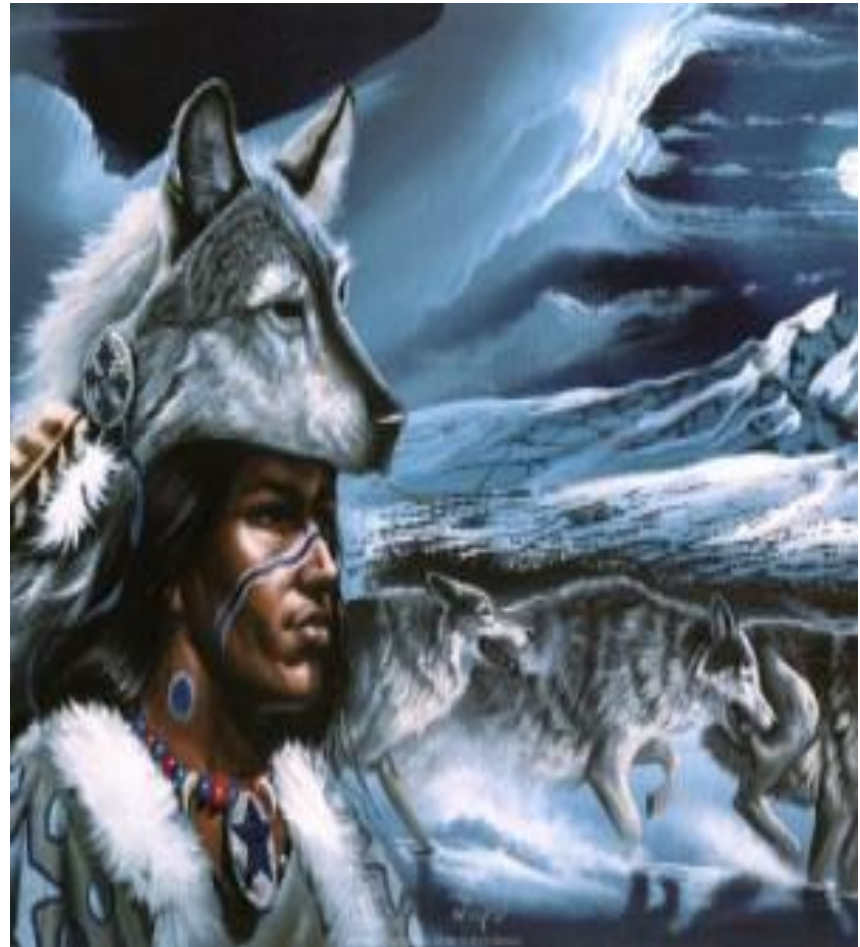
Marriage

- One of their interesting social customs involved marriage
- Like in the East, marriages were pre-arranged
- They were not based on love or attraction, but more of a business like partnership
- In spite of this, or perhaps because of this, divorces did not occur
- The main purpose of marriage was to ensure a **continuation of the species**



Religion

- Their religion was of the **Polytheistic** variety
- They believed in many gods and spirits
- Inuit focused on the power of nature
- They prayed and gave thanks to the animals they killed which gave them life and sustenance
- They also believed that people received benefits for good behavior and were punished for poor behavior (Somewhat like the Eastern concept of **Karma**)
- Prior to the arrival of the Europeans they were a virtually crime-free society
- It was not until the Europeans introduced alcohol and took away their traditional way of life that crime became more prevalent



Naming of a new born child

- Another very interesting custom involved the naming of a new born infant
- They would wait eight days to name the child
- If the child died before eight days he/she was not mourned
- This was likely due to the high infant mortality rate among Inuit at the time
- If the child did not live, it was believed that he/she went back to the spirit realm
- Those that did live were named after a former relative
- This was a way to allow this non-literate society to keep the memory of their ancestors alive

