



TOPIC 2.3

Life circa 1400

2.23 Portage on the Moisie by William Hind

Why were there differences in the ways of life among First Nations and Inuit?

Why would Aboriginal peoples choose to inhabit this place?

Between 1000 and 1500 CE, the inhabitants of Newfoundland and Labrador continued to change. As the lives of early people were so closely tied to the land, even a small variation in an ecosystem or competition with other groups could result in a group's migration or even extinction.

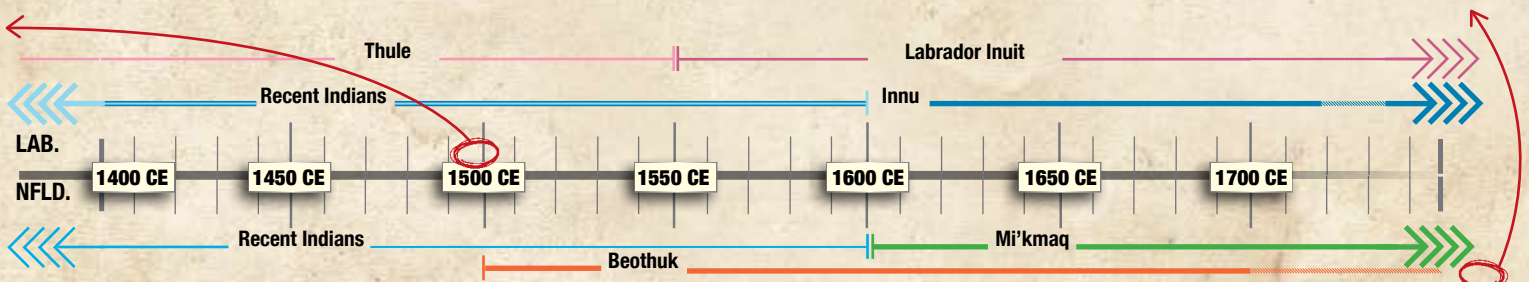
Prior to the arrival of Zuan Caboto (John Cabot) in 1497, it appears that Inuit, Innu, and Beothuk were

established in Newfoundland and Labrador. What we know about these groups before European contact comes from archaeological evidence and oral history.

Written records by Europeans also shed some light on the lifestyles of indigenous peoples after contact with Europeans.

1497: Zuan Caboto (John Cabot) "discovers" Newfoundland for England

The last known Beothuk dies in 1829



2.24



2.25 First Nations and Inuit mid-1600s



2.26 Whale Hunting Near Nassaujak, 1976. Stencil Print by Jeetaloo Akulukjuk and Tommy Evvik

Umiat, which can carry up to 20 people, were used for transportation and for hunting whales. Whales provided Inuit with meat and oil, which could be used in soapstone lamps. In addition, whale bones were used to make tools and as the framework for skin tents.

Inuit

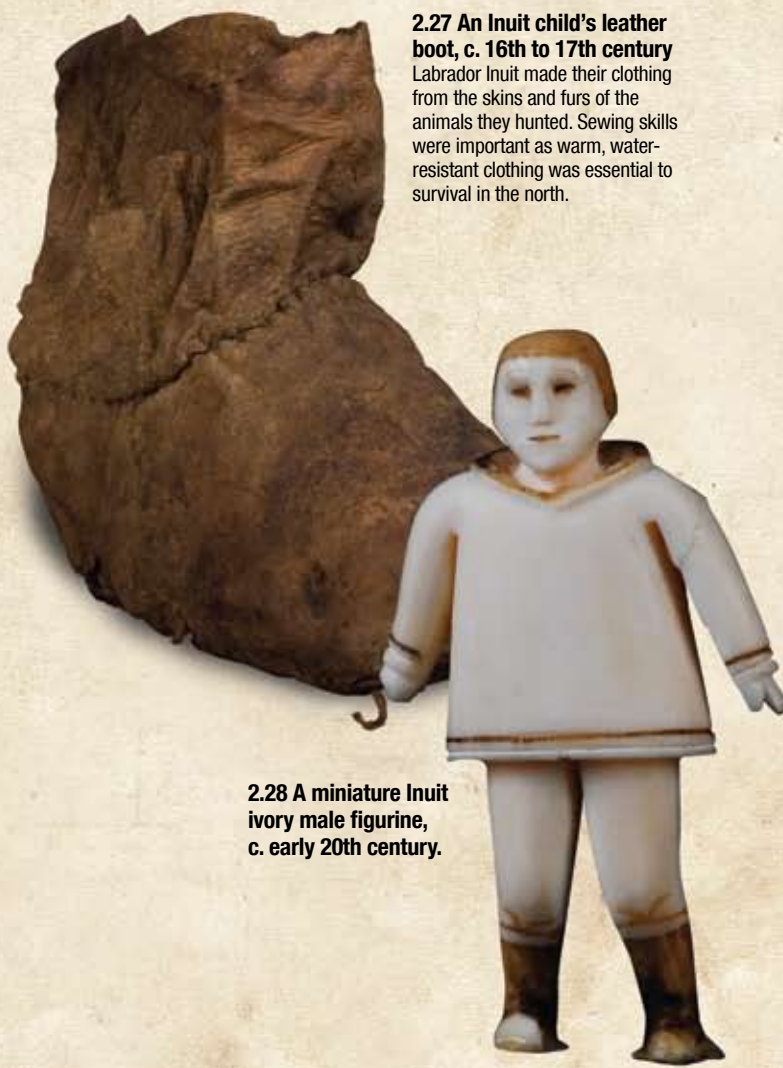
Labrador Inuit are descendants of Thule. Much of what we know about Inuit lifestyle before contact with Europeans is based on oral tradition and archaeological evidence.

Inuit lifestyle involved a seasonal round, with groups moving to pursue resources such as seals, whales, and caribou. Inuit used **umiat**, large open skin-covered boats, for transportation and to hunt large mammals such as whales. They also used one-person **kajait** for transportation and for the caribou hunt. In the winter, dog teams pulled large sleds called **kamutet** to assist travel across the land and ice.

Housing was seasonally adapted. Inuit had summer and winter camps in locations they returned to year after year. Typically people lived in single-family dwellings. Winter houses were earthen huts banked by sods with a roof supported by whale ribs and shoulder blades. The entrance was a long tunnel. These houses were well insulated and efficiently heated with soapstone lamps. In the summer, Inuit lived in skin tents with whalebone frameworks. These were light and relatively easy to set up and take down for travel.

2.27 An Inuit child's leather boot, c. 16th to 17th century

Labrador Inuit made their clothing from the skins and furs of the animals they hunted. Sewing skills were important as warm, water-resistant clothing was essential to survival in the north.



2.28 A miniature Inuit ivory male figurine, c. early 20th century.

Innu

Innu oral tradition says that Innu have always been in North America. Archaeological evidence is less clear. Many **anthropologists** believe the immediate forebearers of Innu were the Point Revenge people who lived along parts of the Labrador coast. About 1400 CE, Innu moved into the interior of Labrador as Thule appeared along the coast.

Like our knowledge of other peoples who inhabited Newfoundland and Labrador at this time, much of what we know about Innu life comes from oral tradition, interactions with Europeans, and archaeological findings.

Innu relied on caribou as a primary resource – using it as a main source of food, clothing, and shelter. Consequently they followed the caribou migration. Innu supplemented their diet with fish and small game like beaver. As part of their seasonal round, some Innu returned to the coast in the summer.

Innu travelled by canoe in summer and snowshoe and toboggan in winter. Because they moved from place to place, Innu lived in **kapminaute** (also referred to as Tshishtuekan-patshuianitshuap) that could be erected quickly. These were made of bent alders, covered in birch bark and caribou hide. Innu took the caribou hides with them and built a new kapminaute frame at their next location.



2.29 This lithograph, entitled *Nasquapees: Otelne and Arkaskhe*, is based on a watercolour done by William Hind in 1861.

2.30 An Innu spike and thimble game, early 20th century.

2.31 A model of an Innu tent, or kapminaute, c. early 20th century. Each kapminaute had a hearth near the entrance with a fire in it that was kept continually lit.

DIMENSIONS OF THINKING

EVIDENCE

When information is used to support an argument, it becomes “evidence”. In the excerpt below, Daniel Ashini disputes what some archaeologists cite as evidence. Ashini suggests that the information can be interpreted differently depending on one’s viewpoint.

Innu are using the opportunity created by mining exploration to further explore their history. They are looking for new archaeological data to help provide a more complete understanding of their past.

When this article was written, Daniel Ashini was serving as Director of Innu Rights and Environment for the Innu Nation. He has also been involved in archaeological work.

Question:

Does Ashini make a strong case to support his contention that evidence can be interpreted differently, depending on one’s viewpoint?

Innu researchers dig into their history

2.32 (Excerpted from an article by Camille Fouillard, 2000.)

“This is important work but I have problems with the way archaeologists label different things and with some of the terms they use,” says Ashini. “For example, they have given our ancestors different names like Maritime Archaic Indians, Intermediate Period Indians and Point Revenge Indians. These archaeologists only identify a clear tie between the last group and the Innu, as if we were all different and distinct peoples.”

Archaeologists claim the evidence is inconclusive and use these different names to interpret information to suit their needs, says Ashini. This is a problem for the Innu during land rights negotiations when governments cite archaeological research to say that the Innu have not been in Labrador for at least the last 8000 years. But Ashini says the archaeologists’ theories don’t hold up.

“We know these people are our ancestors and just because they used different tools and set up their campsites a little differently, in my opinion that doesn’t make them different peoples,” says Ashini.

“A people develops and evolves over time from contact with other peoples and adapts itself to different circumstances. Because European people use cars instead of horse and buggy, because they live in different kinds of houses, use tractors instead of manual ploughs, they are not different peoples from their ancestors.”

Ashini added that some archaeologists like Stephen Loring (of the Smithsonian Institute) are beginning to see that the labels may be incorrect and don’t tell the whole picture. They have begun to reassess their interpretations ...



2.33 Beothuk pendants

Among the most striking Beothuk artifacts are carved bone pieces. They have been found in bundles, sewn to clothing, or strung as a necklace. Some of these carvings can be identified as stylized animals or parts thereof and may have been used as amulets.



2.34 Beothuk projectile points



2.35 Gaming pieces

decorated on one side and plain on the other were tossed in the air. Complex scores based on the numbers that landed face up or face down were kept, probably using bead counters.

Beothuk

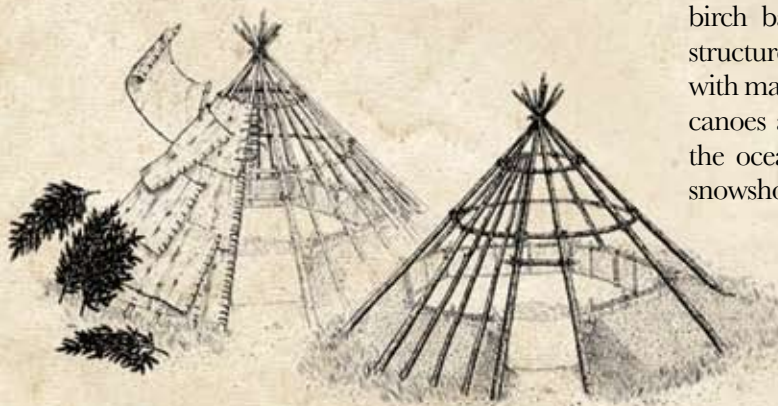
At the time Europeans arrived in Newfoundland and Labrador, between 500 and 700 Beothuk are believed to have inhabited the island of Newfoundland. As the direct descendants of one of the prehistoric populations that are collectively referred to by archaeologists as “Recent Indians,” Beothuk represent the historic period of this native culture. Lists of Beothuk words, obtained from captives, in combination with archaeological findings, have allowed scientists to propose a relationship of Beothuk (i.e., the language) with the Algonquian language family.

Because Beothuk had few interactions with Europeans, our knowledge about their culture is limited. What we know about Beothuk lifestyle, social organization, language, and religion is based on contemporary documents, information obtained from captives, and archaeological findings.

During the summer season small Beothuk family groups or bands roamed along stretches of the coast, harvesting a variety of marine resources, as well as birds and their eggs. In fall they met with other families inland for the big caribou drive, which supplied them with large quantities of meat for the winter. In pursuit of their seasonal round, Beothuk travelled throughout the island employing a variety of hunting and fishing techniques and several methods to preserve surplus food stuff. Several families

or bands overwintered together and thereby created opportunities for socializing, storytelling, teaching, and sharing songs. At the end of the winter, they celebrated the ochring ceremony, a 10 day feast at which every member of the assembled group received a new coat of red ochre. The ochre was considered to be a mark of identity and the first coat, applied in infancy, a sign of initiation.

Like other native groups, Beothuk used the resources of their immediate environment for all their needs. Tools, arrowheads, bows and arrows, and cooking pots were made from stone, bone, wood, or bark. Clothing was made from caribou and other animal skins. Summer shelters, known as **mamateeks**, were constructed from wooden poles bound together and covered with birch bark. Winter mamateeks were more elaborate structures, being surrounded by **berms** and covered with many layers of sods for better insulation. Birch bark canoes allowed Beothuk to travel on lakes, rivers, and the ocean. For winter travel they employed sleds and snowshoes, the latter made of wood and rawhide strips.



2.36 The construction of a mamateek

This is the adjective form of Mi'kmaq.

Mi'kmaq

Mi'kmaq ancestral homelands of Mi'kma'ki stretched across much of what is today Atlantic Canada. The name for the Newfoundland part of this territory, **Ktaqamkuk**, means "land across the water." While Newfoundland Mi'kmaq oral tradition maintains they lived in Ktaqamkuk prior to European contact, the first evidence of Mi'kmaq presence in Newfoundland dates from 1602.

Traditional Mi'kmaq life in Atlantic Canada followed a seasonal round. Most of their food came from the sea. Consequently, Mi'kmaq spent from early spring until fall near the shores – harvesting resources of the sea and land as they came into season. This included fish, which they took with hook and line, **weirs**, and spears. A short distance inland, they hunted caribou in their spring migration.

In the fall, many Mi'kmaq moved inland, where they stayed for the colder months. There they hunted large animals like bears and caribou, fished from rivers, and trapped small game like beavers and partridges.

In summer, Mi'kmaq used birch bark canoes. They ranged from 5.5 to 9 metres (18 to 30 feet) in length and were lightweight, making them easy to portage. In winter, snowshoes were used for walking and toboggans were used to transport heavy goods.

2.37 Mi'kmaq dwelling

Shown here is artist William B. Ritchie's interpretation of a pre-history Mi'kmaq dwelling.



2.38



2.39 Mi'kmaq boots

These boots are made from tanned caribou skins that have been stitched together with thread made from deer or caribou sinew.

Questions:

1. Use a graphic organizer to compare the traditional way of life of Inuit, Innu, Beothuk, and Mi'kmaq in terms of food, shelter, and travel at the end of the fifteenth century. What similarities and differences do you note?
2. What are the main sources of knowledge about the lifestyles of First Nations and Inuit who lived in our province prior to European arrival?