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Subarctic People

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The Subarctic people occupied a majority of Canada from the Yukon to Newfoundland, including parts of seven provinces and two territories.

Food

- Obtaining food was an important and essential ritual for the Subarctic peoples.
- Usually on foot or on snowshoes, they would hunt, fish, trap and gather wild plants.
- Fishing
 - In the winter, ice fishing was popular.
 - In the spring, the rivers and the coastal waters were rich in fish and seafood.
 - Most of the Northern fishes, and their fish eggs, could be eaten.
- The subarctic people often hunted moose, caribou, hare, musk oxen, bear and elk, as well as waterfowl and fish.
- The edible wild plants they collected included berries, tripe, dandelions, moss and marigold.
- Berries were dried in the fall or stored in baskets put in pits in the ground.
- Pemmican, a mixture of berries, grease and animal meat, was a high-energy food that could be preserved for years.
- Tutchone families gathered in spring and summer fish camps, at autumn meat camps, and clustered for part of the winter near dried food supplies and at good fish lakes. By later winter, however, they had to scatter to find game, and sometimes they starved.



Wildberries



Caribou



Musk Oxen

Hunting

- Men did most of the big-game hunting, while women shared hare, fished, cut and dried meat, and processed hides.
- Where Bison and Caribou could be hunted, the drives

and the construction and operation of corrals involved most members of the band.

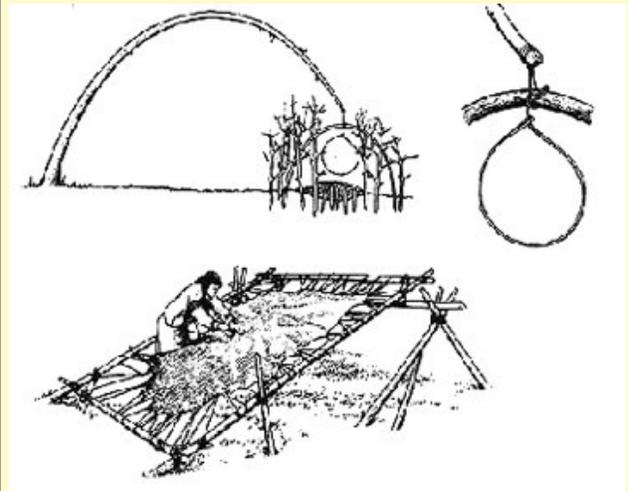
- Depending on an upland or lowland habitat, some tribes relied more on moose hunting or salmon fishing, while the Caribou was plentiful and a main food source for all.
- Life depended on the movements of the Barren Ground caribou. The Innu had a special caribou hunt leader (Atik Utshimau), who led the band on the hunt.
- Considerable effort was taken to cache food and equipment not needed for the season at hand, in specially prepared pits, strong cribbed and conical structures and cairns, or on racks and platforms in trees.



Hunting Caribou



Women with a stretched hide



Animal Snares

Tools

- Hunters used bows, arrows, traps, snares, deadfalls, and for catching the caribou, a drift fence and pound.
- People caught fish with dip and gill nets, traps, spears, and hook and line.
- Women were skilled in preparing meat for drying, hide tanning and sewing, making cooking and storage containers of skins, birchbark or coiled spruce root basketry, and making fishnets from willow baste or babiche.
- Men made snowshoes, toboggans, canoes, sleds and hunting implements.
- A tumpline was a piece of material fastened around the forehead to help support heavy loads.
- Belt looms were used for weaving.
- Subarctic Athapascans had distinctive technologies like large metal knives with double recurved handles, sleds, chair-style birchbark baby carriers, partially decked-over kayak-canoes, and portable domed caribou-skin tents.
- Some Tutchone had raw copper for making knives and arrowheads; the majority used bone and antler.
- Much of the technology was dispensable, but the importance was knowing how to make it and when it was to be used.



Tumpline and Belt Loom

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