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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.

Transportation

- The main transportation of the Subarctic People was walking.
- Survival depended on being able to travel long distances.
- Snowshoes were essential for winter travel.
- Heavy loads were transported on toboggans and, in the far northwest sleds were pulled both by dogs and people.
- Aboriginally few dogs were available for traction.
- During the summer, people and their belongings were moved along rivers and lakes by canoe.
- Since dog traction came only with white contact, belongings were limited to those that could be easily carried or made on the spot, such as the snares used to catch animals of all sizes.



Montagnais Indian camp

Seasonal Migration / Adaptation



Innu Camp

- Subarctic natives were organized into groups of people or bands who were usually related by family.
- Each lived a semi-nomadic life, determined by the fluctuating weather and habitat.
- They typically lived in local bands of 25-30 people.
- Each band moved frequently from one place to another as game supplies changed from season to season and from year to year.
- In the spring they went to the rivers where the fish gathered to spawn and caught all they could. In the fall they followed the caribou migration and get as many as they could. They gathered as much meat and fish as they could when it was available because next day - sometimes for weeks or months - they might find none, and starve.
- They traveled light and preferred to make heavier tools and implements as they were needed rather than carry them from place to place.
- A group's size and strength largely depended on the availability of local



Innu moving camps



Innu Camp

resources.

- A single band often shared its territory with adjacent bands, especially if food became scarce, and certain peripheral areas between territories were used in common.
- There was no such thing as official ownership.
- Sites rich in food sources, such as places with lots of lakes or rivers were usually exploited by the same band year after year.
- During the summer, when food was abundant, several local bands often resided together.
- People changed between bands often, according to kinship ties and marriages.
- Within the Innus and the Dene people, life for each group was similar.
- In the spring, along the Yukon River the Dene prepared their equipment, caught whitefish and pike, and hunted moose, caribou and other game.
- In the beginning of summer, the Dene bands broke up and joined other band members at fish camps to catch and dry king and chum salmon.
- Large summer, there were festivities and the salmon run was fished by the likes of the Han, the Chilcotin, and the Tutchone.
- As fall approached, the Dene hunted, repaired their caribou surrounds, and fished in smaller rivers.
- During the winter, the Dene left the river to hunt and operate their caribou surrounds, or settled near lakes, where they could ice fish.
- The Dogrib always hunted the caribou in the boreal forest during winter and followed them to the edge of the barrens in spring.
- The Innu spent their summers near the Atlantic, Gulf of St Lawrence or James Bay coasts and their winters inland.
- Otherwise through much of the year, families moved about independently hunting, fishing and gathering roots and berries.

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