

First Nations and Inuit Economies

First Nations and Inuit have lived in North America since *time immemorial*—for as long as anyone can remember in all the stories passed on by the Elders. Each society has its own political, economic, and cultural systems.

In this section, you can learn about the variety of economies people had in the past and the common views on the land and natural resources shared by most nations.

Needs and Wants

In the past, First Nations and Inuit depended on the land and natural resources for survival. So the economy of each nation was based on the natural resources available in the region. For example, trees cannot grow in the far north, so the Inuit in those areas built winter homes using blocks of snow or whale bones, stone, and sod. They made summer tents (*tupet*) with bones, antlers, and the hides of seals or caribou. The Labrador Inuit, on the other hand, could often get wood, so they sometimes used wood frames for their tupets or built houses of wood.

The map on the following pages gives you an idea of traditional lands of First Nations and Inuit, and the variety of natural resources that were important in their economies.

Aboriginal Peoples

Aboriginal means “living in a land from earliest times”—in other words, the First People of a region. There are three groups of Aboriginal peoples in Canada today.

- The Inuit [IN-oo-eet] are the First Peoples of the region north of the *tree line* (where the climate is too cold for trees to grow) and in parts of what are now Quebec and Labrador. The Quebec Inuit and Labrador Inuit are two examples of Inuit.
- First Nations are the First Peoples of the rest of the land that is now Canada. There are many First Nations, including the Mi'kmaq [MIG-mah], Maliseet [MAL-ih-seet], Passamaquoddy [pass-uh-muh-QUAH-dee], and Innu [IN-noo] of the Atlantic region.
- The first Métis [may-TEE] were the children of either Inuit or First Nations women and European traders. The Métis today are descendants of these people, or they may define themselves as Métis because of their distinct culture and traditions.