

Aboriginal Peoples circa 1630

Abstract

The map shows the distribution of Aboriginal peoples early in the seventeenth century before the eastern population dislocations. Ethnohistorical societies are identified on the map by the major linguistic family to which they belong. Ethnohistorical societies are Aboriginal peoples that were known by name and location to Europeans early in the seventeenth century. Also mapped are the major archaeological sites current to 1980. A linguistic family code identifies each ethnohistorical society on the map and is used to reference specific information for each ethnohistorical society.

ABORIGINAL PEOPLES IN CANADA circa 1630 represents a temporal cross-section of Aboriginal peoples early in the seventeenth century.

The period was chosen for three reasons. First, it represents a relatively stable period prior to the great eastern population dislocations precipitated by the fur trade, intertribal war and epidemic European diseases. Second, it represents a period during which a great deal of distributional information had been compiled in documents and maps. Third, it is a period for which some archaeological information is available for most of the country.

Distribution and Location of Ethnohistorical Societies circa 1630

European knowledge of ethnohistorical societies was largely confined to an area occupied by the Eastern Woodland groups. These ethnohistorical societies were known by name and location to Europeans early in the seventeenth century, or in some instances, groups that became known somewhat later but are thought to have been in the locations indicated on the map during this period.

- The four major linguistic families known to Europeans circa 1630 were the Iroquoian, Siouan, Beothuk, and the Algonquian.

For this period, all population estimates are approximate. They were derived from a few early observations, as well as estimates given in recent literature. The graduated circles shown on this map indicate the approximate locations of population groups belonging to the major linguistic families. The location of the eastern ethnohistorical societies was determined primarily through seventeenth century written accounts and maps.

Some evidence for the location of these groups comes from documents and maps up to 1680. Many locations are corroborated by archaeological information. Vast

unsettled areas, used as hunting grounds, separated these agricultural villages from each other.

The Iroquoians of the Eastern Woodlands

The location of the Iroquoian ethnohistorical societies are largely corroborated by archaeological evidence. Unlike almost other groups in the sixteenth century the Iroquoian agriculturalists did not take short or long distance seasonal movements. Vast unsettled areas, used as hunting grounds separated these agricultural villagers from each other.



A depiction of Samuel de Champlain's first encounter with the Iroquois (Mohawks) in 1609, a forest skirmish on future Lake Champlain, including fanciful rowboats, rather than canoes.

Source: Courtesy of National Archives of Canada, Ottawa, Ontario / C5750.

The Siouans of the Eastern Woodlands

Location information for the Siouan groups is incomplete except for the Winnebago. At least one of the Dakota subgroups was in the Mille Lacs area of Minnesota, while the Assiniboin, who are linguistically related to the Dakota, were reported west of the Lake-of-the-Woods area by the mid seventeenth century, but probably had been there much earlier.



Gravure of Assiniboin Lodge

Source: E.S. Curtis from North American Indians, Courtesy of the Curtis Collection.

The Beothuk

The Beothuk inhabited all of Newfoundland at this time, particularly the bays and peninsulas of the north shore. From these summer fishing locations they dispersed to the interior for winter caribou hunting. Linguistically they may be remotely related to the Algonquian.



Photograph of a Beothuk birch-bark container covered with red ochre

Source: Courtesy of Mary March Museum, Grand Falls, Newfoundland and Labrador.

The Algonquians of the Eastern Woodlands

The Eastern Algonquians are shown in their summer coastal locations. Groups of non-agricultural Eastern Algonquians dispersed into the interior up the larger drainage basins for winter hunting. Those near the newly emerging English coastal settlements were more fixed in their locations but were being pushed out of the area by this time. It is possible that all the Eastern Algonquian groups had suffered serious population declines through epidemic diseases early in the seventeenth century.

Ethnohistorical data for the Central Algonquian groups is most complete for the Ojibwa and Algonquins. There were probably more Montagnais-Naskapi and Cree groups beyond the area known to Europeans at that time. The locations of the groups in the lower Michigan peninsula and adjacent parts of Illinois lack archaeological confirmation.

In general there appear to be more late prehistoric sites on the western shores of the lower Michigan peninsula than on the eastern. As with the Eastern Algonquians groups, the Central groups are mapped at their spring to autumn fishing locations in major interior lake systems and at the mouths of major rivers where they enter larger bodies of water. Most of these groups underwent long and arduous winter movements, while segments of the populations of some groups also undertook long summer trading expeditions.

Distribution and Location of Archaeological Complexes

The distribution of archaeological complexes is based on the distribution of distinctive late prehistoric (pre-European) artifact assemblages, related settlement patterns and burial practices. Many were seasonally occupied for hundreds of years, and few were probably occupied at the same time. In some areas, such as the Hudson Bay Lowlands and the banks of the Mackenzie River, sites may have been lost over time. The least-understood areas appear to be Athapaskan-occupied lands in the interior of British Columbia, in the difficult terrain of the Yukon Territory, and in the Mackenzie River drainage basin.

- Archaeological complexes have been grouped (based on the basis of discernible similarities in settlement patterns, burial practices, tool assemblages and subsistence patterns) into six groups: Late Prehistoric Arctic, Terminal Woodland, Late Prehistoric Plains, Late Prehistoric Athapaskan, Late Prehistoric Northwest Coast and Beothuk.

Late Prehistoric Arctic

The coastal areas of the Canadian Arctic as well as Greenland and most of Alaska were occupied by the Thule culture. These people arrived in Canada from Northern Alaska shortly after 1000 AD and rapidly spread across the Arctic displacing the earlier Dorset culture. By 1600, due to deteriorating climatic conditions and accompanying shifts in sea mammal concentrations, the Thule people had retreated from the islands north of Barrow Strait and Lancaster Sound.



Thule Artwork: This small ivory comb, with its graceful feminine curves, was conceived at least as much for its aesthetic appeal as its function.

Source: Courtesy of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.

The Thule people had a sophisticated technology adapted to hunting sea mammals, especially the bowhead whale, seal and walrus. Communal summer fishing, caribou and muskox hunting were also important. The semi-circular Thule dwellings, located on beach ridges, were constructed of stone, sod and whalebone.

In the early to middle seventeenth century most of the Thule groups began to alter their subsistence orientation increasingly towards seals, fish and caribou. All the modern Inuit groups are descended from the late Thule people.

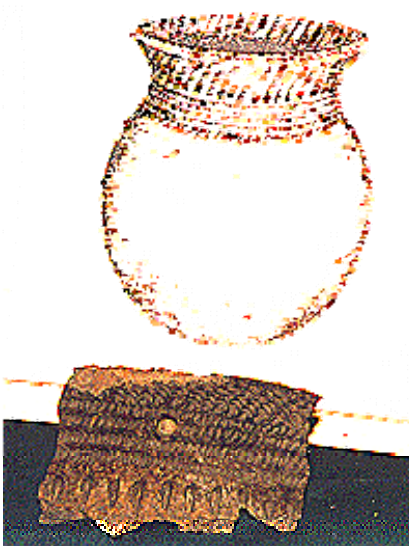
Terminal Woodland

Terminal woodland complexes are divided into two groups: Northwestern Algonquian Complexes and the Terminal Woodland Complexes in the Ohio area.

- Northwestern Algonquian Complexes
- Terminal Woodland Complexes in the Ohio Area

Northwestern Algonquian Complexes

The two major archaeological phases in this area are termed Selkirk and Blackduck after type sites in Manitoba and Minnesota. Settlement locations of these groups are similar: small camps on sandy shorelines and islands, and at the mouths and forks of rivers. What distinguishes them for archaeologists is a slightly different material culture, especially pottery technologies and decorations, and perhaps burial practices. On the whole, their material culture has more similarities than differences.



Blackduck Pottery

The Blackduck phase is typically noted for producing larger, thinner walled and better constructed ceramic pottery, than previously made in the Terminal Woodland phase.

Source: Kehoe 1973. Manitoba Archaeological Society. Winnipeg, Manitoba.

There seems little doubt that Selkirk represents the western extension of various Cree bands before European contact. The identification of Blackduck with specific ethnohistorical groups is more problematical. Many sites have Blackduck and Selkirk components, and some sites, particularly the later ones, contain pottery with Blackduck and Selkirk characteristics, leading one to conclude that the two groups lived peaceably as neighbours and mingled with each other. Archaeologists and ethnohistorians have variously attributed Blackduck to Cree, Ojibwa and Assiniboin. All three groups at one time inhabited the same area and had similar subsistence patterns.

Terminal Woodland Complexes in the Ohio Area

The precontact populations of the upper Ohio were predominately agriculturalists with some gathering of vegetables, nuts, fishing and hunting, especially deer. Although there are internal regional variations, the Monongahela people can be characterized as living in oval or circular palisaded villages up to five acres in size.



Typical Woodland Palisade

Source: The Lawson Prehistoric Indian Village, London, Ontario.

Circular houses, usually containing one fireplace, ringed the interior of the palisade. Generally, villages were situated on high bottomland near major streams or on hills and were only occupied for a few years.

The Fort Ancient complex (near present-day Ohio) also exhibits regional variations but in contrast to the villages of the Monongahela complex, these people lived in much more permanent villages up to ten acres in size. Most villages were heavily palisaded and contained interior courtyards or plazas around which were grouped large rectangular wood and bark houses.



Typical Terminal Woodland Loghouse

Source: The Lawson Prehistoric Indian Village, London, Ontario.

Of these two groups, Fort Ancient had more complex burial practices including mound burials. Some archaeologists have associated Fort Ancient with the Algonquian speaking Shawnee. No good ethnohistorical associations have been made with Monongahela.

Late Prehistoric Plains

The late prehistoric plains archaeological sites are most commonly associated with the grasslands and aspen parkland belts of the western interior of Canada. It is likely that the prehistoric plains groups also extended northwestward into the Peace River area within the bison range. Due to the scarcity of diagnostic artifacts and the similarity of artifacts over the entire area, regional archaeological complexes have been only tentatively identified. The same problems make identification of an archaeological complex with an ethnohistorical group extremely difficult.

In general, the Canadian plains complex is an extension of similar technologies south of the international border. The late prehistoric sites are associated with "Plains Side-Notched" projectile points, "Saskatchewan Basin" ceramics, bison drive kill sites, Tipi rings and "Medicine Wheels".



Photograph of Medicine Wheel at Wanuskewin, Saskatchewan

The Medicine Wheel is an ancient symbol used by many Aboriginal people of North and South America. The Medicine Wheel teaches Aboriginal peoples that all life moves in a circle and each person's journey to self fulfillment lies within. The Medicine Wheel has no beginning and no ending, just as there is no end to our journey of the four directions. The human capacity to develop is infinite - The Medicine Wheel turns forever.

Source: unknown.



Plains "Side-Notched" Projectile Points (arrows)

Source: Manitoba Archaeological Society, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

The latter three have a considerable antiquity and continue into the Historic period. Of the late prehistoric phases, the Old Women's Phase of southwestern Alberta is tentatively identified by some archaeologists with the Algonquian speaking Blackfoot.



Artist Peter Whyte (Canadian, 1905-1966) entitled this painting: Pitching Tipis, Stoney Indian Village (1955, oil on masonite)

Source: Peter Whyte, Luxton Museum of the Plains Indian, Glenbow Museum, Calgary, Alberta.

All the Plains sites are strongly associated with bison hunting. Bison migrated from its summer grassland range to the more sheltered parkland belt and fringe areas of the boreal forest in winter. Human populations appear to have followed these movements.



Artist's Rendition of Bison Drive over a River Bank

Source: University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Late Prehistoric Northwest Coast

The late prehistoric northwest coast complexes are divided into six groups:

- Tlingit
- Haidan
- Tsimshian
- Wakashan
- Salishan
- Kootenaian

The northwest coast fishing societies were contacted by Europeans late in the eighteenth century. The locations given on the map are areas most densely settled

early in the nineteenth century. Recent archaeological and ethnological studies support the view that the overall distribution of groups and way of life depicted here was well established several thousand years ago.

In general, large winter villages were built near sandy beaches in sheltered bays and inlets. In the spring, populations dispersed for coastal fishing, and in the summer and early fall along streams for salmon fishing. The eighteenth-century movement of the Haida to the southern coast of Prince of Wales Island in present-day Alaska, as well as the early nineteenth century shift of the Tlingit up the coast to the Copper River in Alaska have not been mapped. There may have been other movements in the preceding two hundred years which are not known.

Late Prehistoric Athapascans

Late prehistoric Athapaskan complexes are divided into three groups: Eastern Subarctic, Northern Subarctic and the Interior Plateau.

Eastern Subarctic (Late Taltheilei Sites)

The Late Taltheilei complex is the latest pre-European archaeological sequence in the northern Taiga-Tundra area of the Mackenzie and Keewatin Districts. It was named after a similar site on a recessional shoreline of Great Slave Lake at Taltheilei Narrows. In the northern half of this area lithic artifacts are made of shale, while over the remaining area quartzite was also utilized. The Taltheilei sites occupy the area that lies within the migration range of the present four large barren ground caribou herds. The subsistence pattern of these people was adapted to caribou hunting, fishing and trapping. Habitation sites were small, consisting of several tent rings up to eight feet in diameter located near fishing stations and caribou migration routes.

The ethnohistorical societies associated with the Late Taltheilei sites are the Athapaskan Satudene, Dogrib, Yellowknife (Western Chipewyan) and Caribou Chipewyan (Central and Eastern).

Northern Subarctic

The rugged Yukon and the northern British Columbia terrain presents great difficulties to archaeological site surveying; consequently this area is not well known. Judging from work done at the Klo-kut site and others near Old Crow in northern Yukon, the late prehistoric population in this area specialized in caribou hunting. In spring and fall large camps were erected near caribou migration routes to spear the animal as it crossed rivers and negotiated passes and valleys in the mountains. Outlying look-out points were set up to monitor the herd movements. Caribou may also have been trapped in "surround" during prehistoric times. Fish spearing in communal traps was of some importance. In summer and winter, when large caribou herds were absent or had dispersed, large camps split into smaller units to facilitate hunting of the more scattered resources.

The technology of northern prehistoric Athapascan groups was rich in bone and antler tools. Stone working appears to have been adopted during the late prehistoric period. Stemmed stone-points for caribou spearing appear to be a diagnostic tool, as well as the chi-to, or hide scraper common to all Athapascan groups.

Sites in the southern Yukon area appear to be fewer, more scattered and smaller, although this observation may be related to paucity of site surveying in the area. Hunting patterns were more diversified although caribou was still important. Both Plains and Northwest Coast influences are apparent in the material cultural remains.

Interior Plateau

Most archaeologists agree that interior plateau area of British Columbia was occupied by Athapascan groups not earlier than 1300 AD. Although material remains from the late prehistoric plateau sites exhibit considerable regional variation, suggesting local adaptive strategies and differing outside influences, their closest affinities are with sites in the Yukon area.

This has led archaeologists to speculate that movement into the area was from the north, rather than the northeast. During the early historic period northern influences were rapidly displaced by increasing trade with coastal groups.

In general plateau groups were adapted to a cycle of spring and summer fishing of lakes and streams. In late fall they retired to substantial winter villages composed of circular, and in places, rectangular semi subterranean pit houses. The houses took in a variety of game but seems to have specialized in caribou, which was hunted in drives and "surrounds".

Beothuk

The Beothuks are descendants of a Maritime Archaic people of Newfoundland and Labrador. The prehistoric ancestors of the Beothuk can be traced back to people who produced stone tools. These people belong to what archaeologists call the Beach Complex (about 1000 years before the present time), and was followed by the Little Passage Complex which lasted until the arrival of Europeans.

At this time the inhabitants, the Beothuks began to acquire iron tools from their growing contact with Europeans in the sixteenth century.



Photo of Iron tools made from nails. Collection of nails from the Boyd's Cove site. The projectile point on the far right is 12.5 centimetres in length.

Source: Courtesy of Dr. Ralph Pastore and Memorial University, Newfoundland and Labrador.

Definitions of underlined terms

Archaeological complex: All archaeological remains (artifacts, settlement, burials, etc.) thought to be reflective of a particular culture.

Archaeological phases: A temporal or spatial variant within the broader archaeological complex which may have been a subgroup (band or tribe) within the broader culture.

Artifact assemblage: A temporal or spatial variant within the broader archaeological complex which may have been a subgroup (band or tribe) within the broader culture.

Burial practices: The manner in which members of a culture bury their dead.

Ethnohistorical societies: Groups of people known by name and described, however, briefly, in the contemporary European literature and maps.

Linguistic family: Broadest of all language classifications; all languages that are known to have common roots (origin). [For example: there is no link between Iroquoian and Algonquian. They are totally different with no common basis.].

Subsistence patterns: The manner in which members of a culture interact with the physical environment to procure, distribute and consume food and water.

Map Sources

Archaeological Complexes

Distribution of archaeological complexes is based on the distribution of distinctive late prehistoric (pre-European) artifact assemblages, related settlement patterns and burial practices. The distribution of archaeological complexes also gives some indication of the extent of the archaeological survey to 1981. Natural Resources Canada. 1988. Canada-Native Peoples 1630 [map]. Fifth Edition, National Atlas of Canada.

Distribution of Ethnohistorical Societies circa 1630

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Extent of Areas Known to Europeans circa 1630

The approximate extent of the areas known directly to Europeans or through accounts of Aboriginal peoples circa 1630. Areas outside represent the extent of areas unknown to Europeans. Natural Resources Canada. 1988. Canada-Native Peoples 1630 [map]. Fifth Edition, National Atlas of Canada.

Major Linguistic Families circa 1630

The major linguistic families are mapped using graduated circles to represent their estimated population circa 1630. Their location was determined primarily through seventeenth century written accounts and maps. Natural Resources Canada. 1988. Canada-Native Peoples 1630 [map]. Fifth Edition, National Atlas of Canada.

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<http://www.civilization.ca/aborig/inuvial/index.html>
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Canadian Heritage Gallery

<http://www.canadianheritage.com/index2.htm>

The Canadian Heritage Gallery is a very extensive collection of historical Canadiana on the Internet.

Compact Histories of Native Tribes of the US and Canada

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When completed these "histories" will encompass approximately 240 tribal histories (from contact to 1900). They include histories of many Canadian Aboriginal Peoples.

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The Canadian Institute for Historical Microreproductions (CIHM) was established in 1978 to locate early printed Canadian materials (books, annuals, and periodicals), to preserve their content on microfilm, and make the resulting Early Canadian Research Collection available to libraries and archives in Canada and abroad.

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<http://www.geocities.com/SoHo/Atrium/4832/hudson3.html>

Concise history of the two rival trading companies. (The Metis Nation)

The Hudson's Bay Company Archives

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/index.html>

The HBCA offers a wealth of information on the human and natural history of western and northern Canada and the western USA. Whether you are an historian,

genealogist, ethnologist, environmental scientist or land claims researcher, the HBCA may be able to help.

The Iroquois Wars

<http://rfester.tripod.com/iroq.html>

Background information on the Iroquois Wars. (The Illini Confederation)

The Provincial Museum of Newfoundland and Labrador. Publications. Museum Notes. The Beothuks

<http://www.nfmuseum.com/notes1.htm>

Further information on the Beothuk by Dr. Pastore. (Memorial University)

University of Manitoba. Department of Anthropology. Manitoba Archaeological Society. Manitoba Culture History

<http://www.umanitoba.ca/anthropology/manarchnet/toc.html>

The archaeological history of Manitoba, sponsored by the Manitoba Archaeological Society.

University of Manitoba. Department of Anthropology. Manitoba Archaeological Society. Manitoba Culture History. Terminal Woodland Period. Blackduck Phase

<http://www.umanitoba.ca/anthropology/manarchnet/chronology/woodland/blackduck.html>

History of the Blackduck Phase of the Terminal Woodland.

University of Waterloo. Faculty of Arts. Department of Anthropology. Archaeology in Arctic North America

<http://anthropology.uwaterloo.ca/ArcticArchStuff/index.html>

Site includes information on Thule and Dorset Culture. (University of Waterloo, Ontario)

University of Western Ontario. Faculty of Social Science. Association of Canadian Map Libraries and Archives (ACMLA)

<http://www.ssc.uwo.ca/assoc/acml/>

ACMLA actively serves as the representative professional group for Canadian map librarians, cartographic archivists and others interested in geographic information in all formats.

University of Western Ontario. London Museum of Archaeology

<http://www.uwo.ca/museum/>

The London Museum of Archaeology is a unique Canadian museum devoted to the study, display, and interpretation of the human occupation of Southwestern Ontario over the past 11,000 years.

Winnebago History

<http://www.dickshovel.com/win.html>

History of the Winnebago. (Compact Histories of Native Tribes of the U.S. and Canada)

Wyandot

<http://history.cc.ukans.edu/kansas/wn/>

Information on the Wyandot nations of Kansas. (Wyandot Nation of Kansas)