

The work of some of the institutions listed was in part supported through contracts with the National Museum of Canada. The orientation of the researchers has been either toward the development of regional sequences or toward the solution of broader problems which cut across provincial and national boundaries.

Geographically, most of this work was concentrated in the Prairie region. Other investigators, however, were employed in the Boreal Forest of northern Manitoba, the foothills of Alberta, coastal British Columbia, the southern Northwest Territories, and the northern Yukon. One National Museum of Canada party operated in Alaska, west of the Yukon Border, as well as in the southwest Yukon; another party worked under contract in southwestern Alaska.

Several hundred sites were recorded by surveyors, and over 20 sites, often stratified, were excavated or tested. The broad time span of these sites extended from the possibly pre-glacial age of a site in the Yukon to the historic period, represented by fur trading posts and by Indian camps which yielded European trade goods. Most of the sites, however, fell within a period of 1,000 years before and 1,000 years after the beginning of our era. Field work being carried out in 1967 will fill at least some of the geographical and temporal gaps in knowledge of the prehistory of Western Canada.

Canadian Eskimo Archaeology

Archaeology in arctic Canada began with the pioneering work of Therkel Mathiassen of the Nationalmuseet, Denmark, for in 1922-25 he worked in the Foxe Basin-northern Baffin Island area as archaeologist on the famous Fifth Thule Expedition. The Thule and Dorset cultures, noted below, were first defined in 1925 by Mathiassen and by Diamond Jenness of the National Museum of Canada, respectively. There were only a very few other pre-war archaeological forays into arctic Canada until 1948 when work resumed; its rate and range have since increased steadily with many more scientists available to exploit the remarkable financial and logistical improvements of the past 20 years. The improvements run from walking boots to sleeping bags, and from aeroplanes to archaeological methods. Surveys are being pushed into the vast, unstudied areas and intensive work is focusing on key regions while the recovered data are subject to more kinds of analysis than ever before.

Although much indeed remains unknown, Canadian Eskimo origins can be traced back about 5,000 years to Bering Strait and from there the trail wanders away through several routes into Asia. Within the Canadian tundra the story seems readily divisible into four major periods or stages. First there was the Pre-Dorset culture stage of people with a basically Eskimo way of life and these drifted eastward across the deglaciated Canadian Arctic from Alaska to Greenland and Ungava. A culture stage, as yet best known in the Denbigh Flint complex, is the Alaskan parent culture of this population, and it probably existed there about 3000 B.C. As in the Denbigh Flint complex, artifact collections from Pre-Dorset sites are characterized by chipped flint tools, an inventory marked by burins and microblades, and these tool types echo an old Asian heritage. Pre-Dorset people, with a technology adapted to the tundra coast and interior, harpooned sea mammals, harvested fish and hunted caribou, musk-oxen and birds. Radiocarbon dates suggest that the small, seasonally nomadic bands of Pre-Dorset hunters reached north-eastern Greenland and Hudson Strait about 2000 B.C. The second major stage, Dorset culture, reveals again thinly scattered, small bands of hunters who moved with the seasons hunting seal, walrus, caribou, birds and other game and who, like the tourists now, exploited the annual summer runs of char in arctic rivers. These hunters used skin tents in summer and, for winter, sheltered in small settlements of a few, semi-subterranean huts. Toggling harpoons, barbed spears, chipped flint and rubbed slate tools, microblades, bone needles and adzes mark their remnant inventories. They probably made tailored fur clothing and skin boats and there is sound evidence for their having had small, man-hauled sleds. Albeit rare, a most remarkable product of the Dorset culture is its art, tiny carvings