

ABORIGINAL PEOPLES IN THE ATLANTIC REGION

THE MI'KMAQ

The Mi'kmaq are part of the Algonquian linguistic family. There are a little over 22,295 in the Atlantic Region, of which nearly 16,121 live on-reserve.

When the Mi'kmaq first encountered Europeans in the 16th and 17th centuries, their territory stretched from the southern portions of the Gaspé peninsula eastward to most of modern-day New Brunswick, and all of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island.

This area was divided into seven smaller territories loosely united by a common language, kinship and political alliances. Unlike some of their southern neighbours, their society was not based on agriculture; they hunted, fished and gathered their food. This meant their settlement patterns were largely governed by the rhythm of the changing seasons.

THE INNU OR MONTAGNAIS-NASKAPI

The Innu are part of the Algonquin linguistic family. There are a little over 1,235 in the Atlantic Region.

The Innu (or Montagnais-Naskapi people) of Quebec and Labrador Peninsula trace their ancestry to several regional groups. The Naskapi (or Mushuau Inuit) - sometimes called the "Barren Land People" - occupied the desolate interior lands of the far north; the Montagnais (or Mountain People) lived in the forests of the south. Both groups belong to an extremely ancient caribou-hunting culture.

*Population statistics for the provinces are taken from the *Indian Register Population by Sex and Residence - 2002*.

*Population statistics for the Inuit communities in Labrador are taken from the Statistics Canada 2002 Census.



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THE INUIT

The Inuit are part of the Inuktitut linguistic family. There are a little over 2,634 in the Atlantic Region.

The Labrador Inuit live in the northern reaches of Labrador peninsula. They are kindred to a much larger nation, with traditional homelands that stretch from Soviet Siberia to the northern Canadian Arctic, from Alaska in the west to Greenland in the east. While they speak a dialect of the shared language, their technology, culture and organization set them apart. The present day Labrador Inuit are descendants of the prehistoric Thule, hunters who were drawn to Labrador by its abundance of whales and other wildlife, Labrador Inuit are one of the founding peoples of Canada; a maritime people, deeply connected to the environment. In Inuit culture, they speak of "the land" as encompassing the land, sky, watersheds and ocean areas on which the Inuit has depended for thousands of years.

THE MALISEET

The Maliseet are part of the Algonquin linguistic family. There are a little over 5,269 in the Atlantic Region, of which nearly 3,030 live on-reserve.

The Maliseet are the only other Aboriginal people living in the Maritime provinces today. Their lands once stretched along the banks of the St. John River (in present day New Brunswick and Maine) and extended as far west as the St. Lawrence. The Maliseet, like their Mi'kmaq neighbours, are Algonquin. But while the two nations share a similar natural environment and way of life, their languages and culture are quite distinct. The Maliseet are closer to the neighbouring American Native peoples in Maine, New Hampshire and Quebec than to their Mi'kmaq neighbours to the north and east.



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