

A Brief History of North America

People started migrating
out of Africa
about 70,000 BCE.

People walked
through Asia and headed north
towards the northeast tip.
They were probably
following animals
which they hunted for food.

There were still many ice sheets
in the polar regions,
so ocean levels were much lower,
maybe as much as
300 feet lower.

So there was
a sort of land bridge
for people to walk across
to reach North America.
The first ones to cross the bridge
came around 17,000 BCE.

Some people headed south
along the coastline
of the Pacific Ocean.
They headed towards
South America.

Others stayed in North America.

They settled in many places
all over the continent.

We call most of these people
the First Nations people.

The first people
to stay in the north
were the
Dorset people.

They were short, strong people

They used stone tools.

They built stone longhouses.

They carved faces into boulders.

And they settled in

the eastern Arctic.

Much later, more people came
to North America.

We call those people
the Inuit or Thule.

They used tools made of bone.
They settled in the western Arctic.

When the weather warmed up
about 1,000 CE,
the Inuit started to travel again.
They headed east,
all the way to Greenland.

And the Dorset people
started to disappear.

Some say the two groups of people
- the Dorset and Inuit -
intermarried.

There is evidence that
some Inuit
have Dorset genes.

Other archeologists
think that perhaps
the two groups fought each other
and the Inuit won.

Certainly, today,
the Inuit live all across the Arctic.

Meanwhile,
in southern parts of N.A.,
First Nations people
settled
and started their own cultures.

Many years later,
in the 1600s,
French people came to N.A.
Then, British people came to N.A.
They wanted furs
to take back to Europe.

The First Nations people
traded
with those French and British
explorers.

The First Nations people
supplied furs.

The British and French people
gave beads
made of silver and brass.

Large ceramic beads were called
pony beads.

Small beads were called
seed beads.

The First Nations people
also helped these explorers.
For example, they showed them
how to make spruce tea,
which provided vitamin C
which prevented scurvy.

For many years,
the French and British
explored North America.

Both groups wanted
more territory.

Finally, in 1759,
there was a great battle
near Quebec City
on the Plains of Abraham.
The British won.

Four years later,
in 1763,
the Treaty of Paris
established new boundaries...

Here is how N.A. was divided:

British = east of the Mississippi R.
and all of Canada

Spanish = French areas west of
the Mississippi R.

French = Haiti & some tiny islands

The king of England,
King George III,
then issued
a proclamation:

Europeans were told
to stay east of the
Appalachian Mountains.
No more settlements
in First Nations territory
west of those mountains!

Of course,
as is often true in this world,
people kept migrating.
Europeans kept moving west.

In America,
Europeans wanted to take over all the land,
from east to west.
In 1776,
they revolted from Britain
and declared themselves their own nation: the U.S.A.

In 1867,
a group of British subjects
went to London
to visit the Queen:
Victoria.

"Let us form our own country,"
they said.

"Let us be independent, too!"

The queen agreed,
and Canada became a country!

These were the first provinces of Canada:

Ontario

Quebec

New Brunswick

Nova Scotia

In 1870,

Europeans in Manitoba wanted to join.

First Nations and Metis (French and First Nations)
people did not want to join.

There were many battles.

But Britain awarded the province to Canada.

By 1905, all these areas had joined Canada:

Northwest Territories and Yukon

B.C.

Prince Edward Island

Alberta and Saskatchewan

After World War II,
Newfoundland and Labrador
stopped being a territory of Britain
and joined Canada.

Finally, in 1999,
the Inuit,
who had already been here for thousands of years,
got their own territory.

Part of the Northwest Territories
was declared to be a new territory:
Nunavut.

Today,
First Nations people
are negotiating treaties
with the government of Canada.

And they are telling us about their own culture,
which existed long before Europeans arrived in N.A.!

To learn more, read...

Qitsualik-Tinsley, Rachel and Sean. Tuniit. Toronto:
Inhabit Media, 2014.

Wiseman, Blaine. Confederation. Calgary, Weigl, 2014.

Reliability:

1. The Qitsualik-Tinsleys are of Inuit and First Nations ancestry and have written numerous highly praised articles and books.
2. Weigl Publishers is known for its good quality nonfiction books for students.

