Exploration in the Arctic took many forms. As early as the 17th century, European whaling ships travelled Arctic waters in search of whales to supply the markets for oil and baleen. In the 18th and 19th centuries, the search for the Northwest Passage became a preoccupation, and numerous expeditions were launched, including John Franklin's. When his ship failed to return, a new era of exploration began as others set out to search for Franklin and his crew.

In the late 19th century, the Canadian government was very concerned about the presence of foreign whalers in Canadian waters. Sovereignty over the Arctic became an important national issue that led to the posting of government officers in the North. Competition in the fur trade also stimulated exploration and the establishment of trading posts. As Canada grew, so did its economic ambitions and its need to assess northern mineral wealth, and this led to a wave of scientific exploration in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Other explorers, driven by personal ambition, set out in search of adventure. All these exploratory expeditions contributed to our understanding of the Arctic continent - a world both fascinating and forbidding.
Peinture

Route probable de l'expédition de Franklin, plaque de lanterne magique peinte, 1855-1860
Anonyme - Anonymous
1855-1860, 19e siècle
Peinture sur verre
7 x 7 cm
Achat de Arts & Antiques

MP-0000.50.1
© Musée McCord

Clefs de l'histoire:

Arctic geography gradually gave up most of its secrets to 19th-century Europeans, in large part thanks to expeditions led by several generations of explorers starting with John and Sebastian Cabot in the 15th century. Maps and marine charts thus became increasingly accurate and detailed over the course of this period. They were based on the survey work of the explorers, of course, but also on information provided by the Inuit the explorers encountered on their voyages. Little by little, the fuzzy details of maps and charts, often based on mere supposition, were replaced by increasingly precise markings. This map, for example, shows that around 1850, Arctic geography was fairly well known, despite a few minor inaccuracies.

Quoi:
The map shows the probable route of British explorer Sir John Franklin's last expedition, in 1845-47. Franklin perished during the expedition, in which he was seeking the Northwest Passage.

Où:
The Canadian Far North, comprising what is now known as the Northwest Territories, Yukon and Nunavut, covers almost four million square kilometres -- close to 40% of Canada's total area.

Quand:
Sir John Franklin left England in 1845 for the Arctic. Two years later, still without news of the explorer, the British Admiralty sent some ships out to look for him. It wasn't until 1858-59 that an expedition led by John Rae and Francis Leopold McClintock discovered remains of Franklin's crew.

Qui:
Sir John Franklin (1786-1847) was a naval officer, explorer and author. He had a brilliant career in the Royal Navy, taking part in the Battle of Trafalgar and explorations off the coast of Australia.
Clefs de l'histoire:

In the 19th century, an Arctic expedition often took more than a year, and one of the main difficulties was ensuring the survival of the crew. The ships were therefore loaded up with tonnes of provisions and equipment to enable the men to carry out their mission and, hopefully, return safe and sound. Weapons for hunting and fishing, tools for cutting and sawing the ice, and dynamite and special anchors to free icebound vessels were all taken aboard. As the men would often have to go out on the ice, they were also provided with skis, sleds, tents and sleeping bags. Vast quantities of spirits were also loaded onto the ship, to be drunk by the crew or offered to the Inuit. Many items, such as knives, pins, tools and even umbrellas (totally useless in the Arctic!) were taken along to trade with the Native peoples.

Quoi:

This wood engraving was published in The Illustrated London News, an English magazine. Woodcutting is the oldest engraving technique known. It appeared in the first century C.E. in China, but became more common in Europe towards the fifteenth century.

Où:

As its name indicates, The Illustrated London News was published in London, England. Along with news of London and Great Britain, it also carried international news, including pictures of Canada and its history.

Quand:

The Illustrated London News was founded on May 14, 1842, as a weekly. It is still published today, but only twice a year.

Qui:

The Illustrated London News was founded by Herbert Ingram in 1842. A bookseller and printer, this native of Boston was able to establish his magazine with the profits he made from selling laxatives.

© Musée McCord
Clefs de l'histoire:

In the 19th century, the explorers' ships were often former warships. They were not always fast, but they had huge holds that could carry vast quantities of provisions. Before leaving, the ships were adapted to face the rigours of navigation in the icy Arctic waters. The hull, and especially the prow, was reinforced with steel plates. The inside of the hull was also lined with a heavy woollen cloth called fearnought to provide better insulation against the cold. The rigging was generally reduced to allow the vessel to be sailed by a smaller crew and increase the amount of storage space for provisions. The ships were often equipped with steam engines that not only powered them but also heated the cabins. In the case of the Alert and the Discovery, all the metal parts that would be handled were covered with leather so no one would lose a layer of skin in the extreme cold.

Quoi:

Before being turned into an exploration ship, the Alert was a five-gun war sloop. The Discovery was purchased from private ship owners who had built it for the sealing trade.

Où:

The two ships are shown moored at the Portsmouth naval base. The city of Portsmouth is in the south of England, on the Channel.

Quand:

These two ships left England in May 1875 on a scientific mission to the North Pole. The expedition returned to England in October 1876.

Qui:

Captain George S. Nares, aboard the Alert, was commander of the expedition. His second in command was Captain H. F. Stephenson on the Discovery.
Clefs de l'histoire:

In the 19th century, at the height of Arctic exploration, there was no shortage of sailors willing to sign on. Aside from the captain, his officers and the ordinary seamen, the crews consisted of men specially selected for this type of expedition. They were chosen on the basis of several criteria, including their naval service record, health and character. They were usually no more than 1.7 m tall, which made life easier in the cramped quarters of the ships at the time. There was also a chaplain to tend to the men's souls, along with interpreters, Arctic veterans (including old whalers), boiler men to keep the boilers going and even dogs to pull the sleds. Every expedition also included a surgeon to take care of the crew's health. Often, as in the case of David Walker (1837-1917), the ship's surgeon was also its naturalist and scientific officer, and even served as a teacher over the long winter months.

Quoi:

This certificate of character and certificate of discharge, signed by the captain of the Fox, the leader of the Arctic expedition of 1857-59, Francis Leopold McClintock, is an administrative document that rates a sailor's behaviour on a mission and ends his active service on the ship.

Où:

The Fox, on which Walker sailed, was stuck in the ice of Baffin Bay and spent the winter of 1857-58 drifting. The next summer, the voyage continued and the ship reached Bellot Strait, just off Prince Regent Inlet, where it spent its second winter. It returned to England the next year.

Quand:

David Walker was born in Belfast in December 1837. He explored the Arctic between 1857 and 1859. He died in May 1917 after emigrating to the United States.

Qui:

At nineteen, David Walker became the youngest graduate of the Royal College of Surgeons of Ireland. He volunteered for Captain Francis Leopold McClintock's Arctic expedition as physician, naturalist and photographer.
Despite all the preparations and retrofits, the ships that set off in the 19th and 20th centuries to explore the Arctic were often powerless against the northern ice, the obstacle most feared by captains and their crews. And even though over the years sailors came up with all kinds of innovations to get through the ice (cutting a channel with saws or blasting open a passage with dynamite), at the end of the polar summer, many ships became trapped and drifted helplessly for months in the pack, a mass of large pieces of floating ice driven together. They could only hope that the pressure of the pack ice would not damage the ship, or even worse, crush it like a nut in a nutcracker, before the saving spring warmth arrived. Even the most recent ships, like the *S.S. Nascopie*, were vulnerable to pack ice.

**Quoi:**

The *S.S. Nascopie* was a steamer launched in the early 20th century by the Hudson's Bay Company, which used it as a supply ship.

**Où:**

The *S.S. Nascopie* delivered provisions to fur traders and Inuit at some twenty trading posts in the Far North, especially in the eastern Arctic and on Hudson Bay, including Port Burwell, Lake Harbour, Cape Wolstenholme, Charlton Island and Moose Factory.

**Quand:**

The *S.S. Nascopie* sank on July 22, 1947, after hitting an unidentified reef off Cape Dorset, Baffin Island.

**Qui:**

When this photo was taken, the captain of the *S.S. Nascopie* was George E. Mack (1887-1941). He commanded the ship from 1905 to 1927 and later became superintendent of the Hudson's Bay Company.
Impression
L’expédition partie à la recherche de sir John Franklin. Hivernage du yacht « Fox » sur la banquise
Anonyme - Anonymous
15 octobre 1859, 19e siècle
Encre sur papier - Gravure sur bois
40 x 27.5 cm
M993X.5.1348.2
© Musée McCord
Clefs de l'histoire:

In the 19th century, as soon as the end of the Arctic summer arrived, the explorers hurried to get to a good anchorage (a bay, river mouth or other sheltered area) where they could spend the long winter. There, the vessel would be transformed into a fortress: the deck and sides were covered with snow and ice as insulation against the wind and cold, the rigging was taken down, a canvas roof was put up over the upper deck (to provide a sheltered area where the men could exercise), and the rudder blade and propeller were removed to prevent damage to them. To fight boredom during the long months of the cold, dark polar night (October to March) and to avoid sinking into depression, the men organized various activities, such as plays, concerts or hunting parties. Some read, kept journals, or took navigation or science courses given by the officers.

Quoi:

The Fox was a 177-tonne private steam yacht purchased by Lady Franklin (1791-1875) and modified to sail Arctic waters.

Où:

The engraving shows the Fox wintering in Davis Strait, an arm of the sea between Greenland and Baffin Island.

Quand:

The Fox became stuck in the ice at the end of August 1857. Forced to winter on an ice floe, it was not able to get free until April of the following year.

Qui:

The Fox was built by Hall & Co. of Aberdeen, Scotland. Lady Franklin engaged veteran Arctic explorer Francis Leopold McClintock (1819-1907) to command the vessel.
Clefs de l’histoire:

Even though Arctic explorers always, though especially in the 19th century, sailed with their ships’ holds stuffed with provisions (especially dried, salted or canned goods), hunting and fishing were still essential to the survival of the men. Accounts of voyages tell us that crews sometimes took advantage of caches of food left by earlier expeditions, but hunted a wide variety of game, anyway. Seals, in particular, were abundant and prized for their meat and blubber. Apparently grilled seal liver is a real treat! This is a list of game killed by the McClintock expedition of 1857-59:

- Bear: 4
- Seal: 91
- Fox: 20
- Caribou: 8
- Rabbit: 9
- Ptarmigan: (small bird): 82
- Waterfowl: 136

Quoi:

The seal hunt is an ancestral tradition. While the Inuit hunted with harpoons, the Europeans mostly used rifles, which was a less efficient method, since dead seals sink like stones. The cord attached to a harpoon makes it easier to retrieve the seal.

Où:

Seals are hunted on the ice floes. The most effective technique is to wait -- possibly for hours -- by a breathing hole until a seal surfaces.

Quand:

This hunting party was organized on one of the Arctic voyages of the S.S. Nascopie. At the time, several dozen steamships used to converge on the area for the seal hunt.

Qui:

The men are shooting and gathering up the seals are likely members of the crew of the S.S. Nascopie. Unusually for white hunters, they are equipped with harpoons.
Clefs de l'histoire:

Sir John Franklin, naval officer, explorer and author, was born in England in 1786. He had such a brilliant career in the Royal Navy that the Admiralty gave him command of two Arctic expeditions in a row: one from 1819 to 1822, the other from 1825 to 1827. These two were called "overland" expeditions because their goal was to explore the northern coast of Canada from land bases near Great Slave Lake and Great Bear Lake. But it was after his third expedition, in 1845, that Franklin's name became legendary. On that voyage in search of the Northwest Passage, he commanded two ships, the Erebus and the Terror. Two years after their departure, however, the vessels disappeared and the Admiralty sent several expeditions to look for them. Some missions were even paid for by Lady Franklin, the explorer's wife. In 1859 one of these missions confirmed to a horrified England the tragic end of Franklin's expedition in the Canadian Far North.

Quoi:

This engraving was done to mark Franklin's first overland expedition in the Canadian Arctic.

Où:

The landscape behind Franklin shows Fort Enterprise, a small post near the Yellowknife River, north of Great Slave Lake. That's where Franklin and his men spent the winter of 1820.

Quand:

John Franklin was born in Spilsby, England, on April 16, 1786. He was the son of Willingham Franklin, a mercer (textile fabric dealer), and Hannah Weekes. He joined the Royal Navy as a first-class volunteer in 1800.

Qui:

Though first and foremost a naval officer, John Franklin was also an author, having published accounts of his expeditions. Few people know that, in addition, he served as lieutenant-governor of Van Diemen's Land (now Tasmania, Australia) from 1837 to 1843.
Some thirty expeditions set out in search of Sir John Franklin (1786-1847), who disappeared in the Arctic in 1847. It was the expedition of 1857-59, headed by Francis Leopold McClintock (1819-1907), which confirmed the death of Franklin and his men. After spending the winter of 1845-46 on Beechey Island, Franklin sailed south through Peel Sound. He reached Victoria Strait, near King William Island, but his ships were hemmed in by ice. A manuscript left by one of Franklin's subordinates indicates that Franklin died of a heart attack in June 1847 and that, despite the arrival of summer, the ships could not escape the ice. In April 1848, twenty-one men died of starvation or scurvy. The rest of the crew abandoned ship and attempted to get to the mainland on foot, but in a weakened state, all the men perished of exposure, hunger or scurvy. The search parties that went looking for Franklin found many artifacts. These objects attest to what happened to Franklin, but also offer evidence of his contribution to knowledge of Canada's northern coasts.

**Quoi:**
These various objects belonged to members of Franklin's last expedition. Among the artifacts found are a sextant, a watch, knives and a rifle. All are necessary to Arctic survival and exploration.

**Où:**
Most of the relics of the Franklin expedition were found near King William Island, between Victoria Island and Boothia Peninsula.

**Quand:**
It was in 1859 that most of the traces of the Franklin expedition were found, over 10 years after the last members of the crew had died.

**Qui:**
Many expeditions set out in search of Franklin, starting in 1847, but it was Captain Francis Leopold McClintock who found the traces in 1859.
Fort Resolution. Pour articles divers fournis à l’expédition de secours dans l’Arctique
1848, 19e siècle
Encre sur papier
17 x 20 cm
Don de David Ross McCord
P248_A02.49
© Musée McCord

Clefs de l'histoire:

Fur traders, chief among them the Hudson’s Bay Company, played a major role in the history of Canada. What is less well known is that these companies also provided considerable logistical assistance to crews making their way across the Arctic, and especially Arctic overland expeditions from bases in the Northwest Territories, where the fur companies had trading posts. In addition to providing men familiar with the territory, the companies transported or accumulated equipment and provisions for the explorers at various locations, like Fort Resolution, on Great Slave Lake, Fort Good Hope, near Great Bear Lake, Fort Chipewyan, near Lake Athabasca, or York Factory, on Hudson Bay. A wide variety of goods were supplied, ranging from dried food to clothing, tools and boats.

Quoi:
This statement of account confirms receipt of goods by expedition members. For instance, the quantities of snowshoes and fresh and salted food supplied -- including salted reindeer tongues! -- are itemized.

Où:
The goods listed on this statement of account were supplied to members of the expedition at Fort Resolution. This was a Hudson's Bay Company trading post on Great Slave Lake.

Quand:
The goods were prepared in July 1848 for the Arctic overland expedition led by Sir John Richardson and Dr. John Rae. It was one of the many missions that set out in search of Sir John Franklin, who had disappeared in the Arctic in 1847.

Qui:
Sir John Richardson was a surgeon, explorer, natural historian and ichthyologist (fish expert). He was born in Dumfries, Scotland, on November 5, 1787, and died in Grasmere, Westmorland, England, on June 5, 1865.
Description:
Officier de marine, artiste et explorateur de l'Arctique, Sir George Back (1796-1878) fait partie de l'expédition de John Franklin sur la rivière Coppermine en 1819. En 1824, toujours en compagnie de Franklin, il entreprend une expédition par voie de terre jusqu'à l'embouchure du Grand lac de l'Ours, puis jusqu'à la côte arctique. En 1834, lors d'une mission de recherche pour retrouver John Ross, il découvre la Thlew-ee-choh (Grande rivière à poissons) qui portera plus tard son nom. En 1839, Back reçoit la médaille de la Société royale de géographie et le titre de chevalier. Les journaux de Sir George Back, qui datent de 1833 à 1835, témoignent des défis et des épreuves que devaient affronter les explorateurs de l'Arctique à cette époque.

Clefs de l'histoire:
Much of what we now know about the Arctic explorations of the 19th century we owe to the accounts of officers and sailors who were involved in the expeditions. Although some of these "authors" noted the strict minimum in their diaries, others were more expansive, including observations on the wildlife, plants, weather, daily life aboard ship or meetings with the Inuit. This is the case of Sir George Back (1796-1878), whose journal of the expedition of 1819-22 reveals as much about "his own complex temperament" as about the "human drama that developed as the expedition faced an increasingly perilous series of trials." Back also left another, more scientific journal, in which he wrote his observations of the northern lights on a subsequent expedition, from 1833 to 1835. As he was also an artist, he illustrated his journal with small watercolours that constitute invaluable evidence of the scientific study conducted by the 19th-century explorers.

Quoi:
The northern lights (or aurora borealis) look like streamers or bands of light of various colours. They are not reflections of sunlight on Arctic ice, as many people believe, but the result of the collision of solar particles with the Earth's atmosphere.

Où:
The northern lights can generally be seen at about 70 degrees of latitude, near the Arctic circle. The aurora is emitted at altitudes of 80-150 km, in the ionosphere (one of the upper layers of the Earth's atmosphere).

Quand:
The northern lights can occur at any time of year. However, as they are only visible at night, winter is a good time to see them. They are more frequent every eleven years, a cycle that corresponds with maximum sunspot activity.

Qui:
It was probably Galileo who, in the 17th century, named this phenomenon the aurora borealis. The Inuit had long held a variety of beliefs associated with the northern lights, sometimes interpreting them as the dance of the spirits of certain animals or even departed humans.
Photographie
Pilotes de la Compagnie de la Baie d'Hudson et de Revillon Frères à bord du vapeur « Adventure », Fort Chimo (Kuujjuaq), baie d'Ungava, 1909
Hugh A. Peck
1909, 20e siècle
Sels d'argent - Gélatine argentique
7.6 x 13.3 cm
Don de Mr. Richard H. Peck
M2000.113.6.222
© Musée McCord

Clefs de l'histoire:
As early as the 16th century, European explorers were in contact with the Inuit. By the 19th century, encounters had become quite frequent. Over the years, the Inuit helped many missionaries, fur traders and explorers. They showed the Europeans how to survive in the Arctic, how to travel by dogsled, how to dress and how to build igloos. The Inuit also provided all kinds of advice on coastal navigation in northern waters. In the 19th century, they acted as guides for European fishermen. As they were familiar with the region, they helped explorers fill in their maps and charts. They also travelled on ships as pilots, a practice that became common and continued into the 20th century, as can be seen by this photograph showing four Inuit pilots on the upper deck of a steamer in the service of the Hudson's Bay Company.

Quoi:
The S.S. Adventure, on which this picture was taken, was a solid steamship used for sealing by Harvey and Co. in the early 20th century.

Où:
Kuujjuaq (known as Fort Chimo at the time the picture was taken) is on Ungava Bay, in northernmost Quebec, near the Koksoak River.

Quand:
In 1830 the Hudson's Bay Company set up a trading post there to stimulate the fur trade.

Qui:
Révillon Frères, which employed some Inuit pilots, was a Paris fur company. It was bought out by the Hudson's Bay Company in 1936.
Aquarelle

Vue en aval des remparts depuis la rivière Hare-skin

Sir George Back
1826, 19e siècle
Aquarelle et encre sur papier
12.1 x 19.1 cm

Acheté avec l'aide d'une subvention des Biens culturels mobiliers accordée par la ministre du Patrimoine canadien en vertu de la Loi sur l'exportation et l'importation de biens culturels

M2003.146.1
© Musée McCord

Clefs de l'histoire:

British naval officer George Back (1796-1878) was a self-taught artist who began drawing while being held prisoner in France during the Napoleonic Wars. It was in part thanks to this talent that he was selected for Franklin's expeditions. Franklin used some of Back's sketches to illustrate his own travel accounts. Although George Back was not the first European to do Arctic landscapes, his drawings and watercolours are the work of one of the first talented artists to have spent time in those regions of the globe and thus provide priceless evidence of the history of exploration of Canada's Far North.

Quoi:

George Back painted many scenes of the Canadian Arctic. Several of his works were used to illustrate Sir John Franklin's accounts of his voyages. The landscape shown here was never published, however.

Où:

The Hare-skin River that Back painted is near the Mackenzie, in the Northwest Territories. The small community of Fort Good Hope is at its mouth.

Quand:

This picture was painted in 1826, when George Back was taking part in the second Arctic overland expedition led by Sir John Franklin.

Qui:

George Back, naval officer, explorer and artist, was born in Stockport, England, on November 6, 1796. He died in London in 1878.
Compas
Arctique central
Inuit: Iglulingmiut
Anonyme - Anonymous
1925-1930, 20e siècle
1.9 x 16.2 cm
Don de la succession de Mr. John M. Kinnaird
M978.76.28
© Musée McCord

Harpon
Arctique central
Inuit: Iglulingmiut
Anonyme - Anonymous
1928-1930, 20e siècle
© Musée McCord
Whaling

European whaling in the Arctic regions began in Davis Strait in the 17th century. Hunting activities were confined to the Eastern (Greenland) side, until the expeditions of John Ross (1818) and W. Edwards Parry (1819), who crossed Baffin Bay and continued on to Lancaster Sound. By the 19th century, Dutch, German, English, Scottish, American, Russian and Canadian ships were fishing across the Arctic seas.

These areas were dangerous, and many ships were crushed by ice. So the whalers began spending the winters in sheltered harbours hoping to get an early spring start to the whaling season. After 1850, permanent shore stations were built, such as those at Kekerton and Blackhead Island in Cumberland Sound, on the east coast of Baffin Island, Nunavut. Over-wintering was also a risky business, although hiring Inuit hunters, to supply food, and seamstresses, to make clothing, increased the whalers’ chances of survival. From 1890 to 1908, Herschel Island (Yukon) was a whaling hub; it was here that whaling ships, guided by Inuit hunters, discovered a population of bowhead whales, prized for their oil and baleen.

Quoi:
The Inuit were specialized hunters of large sea mammals, especially seals and whales. They hunted these marine mammals using a toggle-head harpoon, an implement designed to secure a detachable point, or head, to the prey animal. A line attached to the head allows the hunter to retrieve the quarry once it has been struck. Attached to the leather harpoon lines are several sealskin floats inflated with air, which the animal drags as it tries to escape. When the whale is exhausted, the hunter kills it with a long-handled lance.

Où:
This whaling harpoon was collected in Pond Inlet, Nunavut.

Quand:
This harpoon was probably made and used between 1928 and 1930.

Qui:
Made by the Iglulingmiut (Foxe Basin, Nunavut), the harpoon was collected by John M. Kinnaird, a Hudson’s Bay Company apprentice clerk stationed at Southampton Island from 1925-26 and Pond Inlet from 1928-30.
Clefs de l'histoire:

The impact of the whaling industry on the Inuit was profound. Because many Inuit were employed in the industry as pilots, hunters, dog-team drivers and seamstresses, their families moved close to the whaling stations, where they had access to trade goods. However, this proximity to Europeans also resulted in the spread of diseases to which the Inuit had no immunity. Epidemics of measles, typhus and scarlet fever swept through their populations. In 1902-03, the Sallirmiut of Southampton Island in northern Hudson Bay were wiped out by disease.

The influx of whalers also put a strain on local resources. To provide meat for the ships' crews, caribou herds were over-hunted and many Inuit came to rely more and more on European goods. Scholars estimate there were 146 whaling voyages to Hudson Bay between 1860 and 1915, of which 105 over-wintered. By 1905, the whaling industry was dying because Arctic whale stocks had almost completely collapsed. The last whaling ship in Hudson Bay, the A. T. Gifford, burned and was lost with its entire crew in 1915.
Quoi:
This hair ornament made of ivory is decorated with a motif of incised dots. Carved conical or spherical pendants originally hung from holes at the base, while the upper holes were used to suspend the ornament to the hair.

Où:
This small ivory hair ornament comes from Southampton Island, Nunavut.

Quand:
This hair ornament was probably collected on Southampton Island between 1925 and 1926 but made prior to 1903.

Qui:
Historic period accounts indicate that this style of hair ornament was unique to the Sallirmiut of Southampton Island, Nunavut. The Sallirmiut inhabited three islands in Hudson Bay - Southampton, Coats and Walrus - and maintained a culture distinct from the mainland Inuit. They lived in stone and sod houses, and hunted seal, walrus, whales, polar bear and caribou, as well as fish and birds.
Description:
À compter du début des années 1800, le contact avec les explorateurs, les baleiniers et les marchands non autochtones a permis aux Inuit d’entrer en possession d’une vaste gamme de marchandises de troc, incluant des étoffes colorées, des pièces de monnaie, des ustensiles de métal et des perles de verre. Comme le démontre cet amautil du milieu du dix-neuvième siècle provenant de la région du détroit d’Hudson, les femmes inuit n’ont pas tardé à utiliser ces nouveaux objets comme éléments décoratifs dans la fabrication de leurs vêtements. Des pièces d’un cent américaines datant de 1848 à 1855 ornent le pan arrière de l’amauti, tandis que des cuillères, des pendeloques de laiton et des perles de verre décorent le devant. Nous savons que cet amautil appartenait à une veuve parce qu’il est muni du petit amautil plat (poche de bébé) qui symbolise l’ancien rôle de maternité de la femme.

Clefs de l’histoire:
Arctic Sovereignty
The activities of foreign whalers in the Arctic were of great concern to the Canadian government. Though the Arctic Islands had been transferred to Canada by the British government in 1880, no Canadian government presence had been established there, and whalers were operating freely, without regulation.

In 1897, the Canadian government’s Department of Marine and Fisheries sent Dr. William Wakeham (1844-1915) on a marine expedition charged with assessing the span of time during which the Hudson strait was free of ice, reporting on foreign whaling activities and the potential for fishing in the region, and asserting Canadian rights over Baffin Island and the Arctic Archipelago. In 1897, near the end of Wakeham’s mission, he erected a cairn at Kekerton and proclaimed Canadian sovereignty over these territories.

Quoi:
This is a widow's amauti. It has a small, flat baby pouch just below the hood in the back, symbolizing the widow's former role as a child-bearer (from birth until about two years of age, Inuit babies are carried in a pouch under the mother's hood - the amaut). In the early 1800s, non-Aboriginal explorers, whalers and traders began providing the Inuit with an array of trade goods, including dyed cloth, coins, metal utensils and glass beads.

**Où:**
This amauti comes from the Nuvummiut Tariunga (Hudson Strait) area.

**Quand:**
As this mid-19th century amauti demonstrates, Inuit women incorporated novel materials into the design elements of their garments. American one-cent pieces dating from 1848 to 1855 decorate the back flap of this amauti, while spoons, lead drops and glass beads ornament the front.

**Qui:**
Dr. William Wakeham collected this amauti in the course of his marine expedition. It was made and worn by a Nunatsiarmiut (Baffin Island, Nunavut) woman.
Grattoir à peaux
Arctique de l'Ouest
Inuit: Inuvialuit
Anonyme - Anonymous
1900-1905, 20e siècle
4.6 x 10.5 cm
Collection Forbes D. Sutherland - Don de Miss Yvonne Sutherland
ME930.18.1-2
© Musée McCord

Clefs de l'histoire:

North West Mounted Police (NWMP)

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Canadians began to fear that the United States was planning to annex its Arctic territories, using the activities of American whalers as a pretext. In response to this perceived threat, Canada established detachments of North West Mounted Police (NWMP) in the Arctic. Their role was to enforce Canadian laws, impose whaling licenses and display the flag, namely, to establish Canada's undeniable sovereignty to the Arctic. The first posts were set up in 1903 at Fullerton, north of Igluligaarjuk (Chesterfield Inlet), and at Herschel Island (Yukon).

Despite these measures, foreigners appeared to ignore Canada's claims in the Arctic, so more detachments were sent: between 1922 and 1924 posts were established at Craig Harbour, Pond Inlet, Pangnirtung and Dundas Harbour. In 1926, the Bache Peninsula post was established on the east coast of Ellesmere Island. Although the island was unpopulated, the NWMP maintained exploratory patrols on it. One of these was commanded by Inspector A. H. Joy, who had travelled from Devon Island through the Parry Islands and northeast to the Bache Peninsula, covering some 2700 km by dog team. In 1928, Constable T. C. Makinson explored the large inlet off Smith Sound that today bears his name.

Quoi:
Scrapers were made in several forms and of different materials. The choice of the scraper depended upon the type of animal hide and the stage of its preparation. As can be seen from the handle of this stone-bladed scraper, scrapers were carefully shaped to fit the contours of the user's palm and fingers.

Où:
This scraper was collected at Herschel Island (Yukon).

Quand:
This scraper was made in the 19th century by an Inuvialuit man (Inuit of the Mackenzie area), especially for his wife. The shape of the scraper was adapted to her hand, to ease the fatigue of scraping and thinning hides to prepare them for clothing.

Qui:
This scraper was collected by Forbes D. Sutherland, a constable with the North West Mounted Police (NWMP) who was posted to the Mackenzie District, Fort MacPherson (Northwest Territories), in 1903-04 and Herschel Island (Yukon) in 1904-05.
Étui à aiguilles
Arctique de l'Ouest
Inuit: Inuvialuit
Anonyme - Anonymous
Vers 1857, 19e siècle
24.5 x 6 cm
Don de la Natural History Society of Montreal
M12164
© Musée McCord

Clefs de l'histoire:

The Hudson's Bay Company and Arctic Fox

As the market for whale products declined, the fur trade pushed north. The Hudson's Bay Company, facing increased competition by rival independent traders in the south, intensified its efforts to promote white fox trapping among the Inuit. Company employees were sent on expeditions in the hopes of establishing trade relations with Inuit groups. Eventually, the company built trading posts in the Arctic, prompting the migration of Inuit groups from their traditional hunting territories. For example, the Netsilingmiut, who are now established on Igluligaarjuk (Chesterfield Inlet), Nunavut, moved there in the 1920s from their traditional hunting ground some 800 kilometres to the north. Part of the reason for their migration was having more opportunities to trade at the Hudson's Bay Company post, which was established in Igluligaarjuk (Chesterfield Inlet) in 1912.

Quoi:

The Inuit have been able to survive in the Arctic in part because of the skill of Inuit seamstresses and the clothing they produce. Non-Aboriginal men and women working in the Arctic quickly adopted this type of clothing, commissioning garments from Inuit women. Traditional sewing equipment consisted of an ulu, needle and awl, thimble and thimble-guard, and a needlecase. Sewing kits also contained sinew and pieces of fur for clothing repairs.

Où:

This needlecase and thimbleguard were collected in the Anderson River region, Northwest Territories.

Quand:

This needlecase was collected around 1857.

Qui:

This artifact is possibly from the now extinct Karnngmilik people (Inuit of the Mackenzie River District). It was collected by Roderick R. MacFarlane (1833-1920), Arctic explorer and chief factor in the Mackenzie River district for the Hudson's Bay Company. He was sent in June 1857 to explore the Anderson River Valley and investigate the possibilities of trade with its Inuit inhabitants.
At the start of the 20th century, Revillon Frères (an established but expanding Parisian fur company, which since 1860 had opened stores in London, New York and Montreal) decided to set up a network of fur-trading posts to compete with the Hudson's Bay Company. In 1909, Revillon Frères had forty-eight stores in the Eastern Arctic division while the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) had fifty-two. Competition between these companies ended in 1936 when the HBC bought out Revillon Frères.

To supply their Arctic posts, these two companies maintained a fleet of steamers that sailed annually to all of their trading posts, bringing in company personnel, doctors and dentists, as well as enough supplies, provisions and trade goods for one year, then returning home with Arctic fox and other lucrative animal pelts. The ships supplying the Revillon Frères posts made the journey in twelve weeks. They could not go through the Hudson Strait before August 1, and it was dangerous for them to pass through any later than November 1. Some of the ships took passengers along. One such passenger was Hugh A. Peck, a young Montreal architect eager to see the world, who stayed on board for the 12-week interlude.

**Quoi:**

Umiaks are the skin boats, capable of carrying heavy loads that were usually manoeuvred by women. They could hold up to twenty people and were used to transport families to seasonal hunting areas in the summer, as well as for whale-hunting expeditions. Although this is a model, it is meticulously accurate as to the method and materials used in building life-size umiaks.

**Où:**

This model umiak was probably purchased by Hugh A. Peck when the steamer he was travelling on stopped at Kuujjuaq (formerly Fort Chimo), Nunavik.

**Quand:**

This model umiak was collected in 1909.

**Qui:**

Umiaks were no longer being made by Central Arctic Inuit at the time of first contact with Europeans, although the Eastern and Western Inuit continued making them until the early 20th century, when they were replaced by wooden whaleboats and other motorized boats.
Clefs de l'histoire:

Arctic Adventurers - Hugh A. Peck

After finishing his studies and before entering the work force, Hugh A. Peck, like many other young men at the time, set out in search of adventure. He boarded a Revillon Frères steamer, appropriately named the S.S. Adventure and commanded by Captain Thierry Mallet (a Revillon Frères post inspector), Captain Crouch and Captain Cross. The Adventure left Montreal on July 28, 1909, for Strutton Island, Nunavut, the distribution centre of Revillon Frères for the James Bay region. Peck returned to Halifax on October 6, 1909.

Hugh Peck put together a remarkable collection of artifacts. Most of the tiny ivory models came from Kuujjuaq (formerly Fort Chimo); however, some were obtained at other posts or were made by the Inuit men and women hired by Revillon Frères to unload the ships. Peck kept a detailed journal of his adventure, writing passages on the fur trade, the dangers encountered, the manufacture and use of certain tools by the Inuit and on his impressions of the waterscape, landscape and people he met.

Quoi:

Small carving of an Inuit woman wearing an amauti, or woman's parka. From birth until about two years of age, the child nestles against the mother's back in the amaut - a built-in pouch just below the hood that both supports the baby and reinforces the bond between mother and child.

Où:

Purchased by Hugh A. Peck in Kuujjuaq (formerly Fort Chimo), Nunavik.

Quand:

This carving was collected in 1909.

Qui:

The influx of whalers in the second half of the 1800s prompted Inuit men to increase their production of small carvings, which were much in demand by ships' crews as "souvenirs" or "keepsakes."
Clefs de l'histoire:

Inuit Clothing

Specialized hide and fur clothing is probably the most important technological innovations of the Inuit to ensure their survival in the Arctic environment. A family's health and survival depended in large part in a woman's ability to sew garments that would keep family members warm in frigid winter temperatures (-40°C to -60°C). These garments also enabled men to hunt and travel during the difficult winter season.

The basic reason for the effectiveness of Inuit clothing is layering. An outfit consists of an inner parka (atigi) with the fur facing the wearer's body and an outer parka (quilltutuq) worn over this with the fur facing out. The layer of air trapped between the atigi and quilltutuq acts as insulation, and the loose-fitting garments allow freedom of movement and the circulation of the warm, trapped air. Europeans quickly realized the superior qualities of Inuit clothing and commissioned Inuit seamstresses to make garments, boots and sleeping bags for them.

Quoi:

These two sealskin garments, a man's quilltutuq (parka) and qarliik (trousers), are traditionally worn during warmer, wetter weather because they are lightweight, shed water and do not shed when damp. The parka has a straight cut, side vents and a pointed hood. The back is longer than the front to protect the wearer from wind and snow. This outfit has various European elements: cotton pockets, fly-front trousers and wooden buttons to hold suspenders.

Où:

This outfit was acquired in the Nuvummiut Tariunga (Hudson Strait) region.

Quand:

Dr. William Wakeham was sent by the Canadian government's Department of Marine and Fisheries on an expedition to Hudson Strait to assert Canadian rights over Baffin Island and the Arctic Archipelago. He commissioned and wore this outfit while sailing the S.S. Diana through these Arctic waters in 1897.

Qui:

This sealskin ensemble was probably made by a Nunatsiarmiut (Baffin Island) seamstress for Dr. William Wakeham.
Clefs de l'histoire:

Scientific Exploration

In 1841, the Province of Canada (composed at the time of southern Ontario and Quebec) realized that to develop a competitive industrial economy it first had to assess what resources were available across its vast territory. The Geological Survey of Canada (GSC) was established to carry out this mission. As the Dominion grew after the purchase in 1870 of Rupert's Land (named for Prince Rupert, the first governor of the company) from the Hudson's Bay Company, so did the territory to be explored.

Although the work carried out by the GSC was primarily a geological assessment and careful mapping of the physical features, the scientific staff had far-ranging interests. In addition to collecting valuable information on the presence or absence of mineral wealth, they wrote descriptions of Aboriginal communities, environmental conditions, climatic conditions, fauna, flora, hydrographic systems and so on.

One cannot discuss these Arctic expeditions without highlighting the role of Inuit men and women. Their presence and expertise often ensured the survival and well-being of the survey parties, and underlay the success of such enterprises.

Quoi:

Snow goggles made of wood. Snow goggles (iggaak) were worn in spring to prevent snow blindness. The shape of the openings prevented burning of the retina by the ultra violet radiation in the sun's rays reflecting off the snow. Such openings improved the hunter's central vision by reducing his peripheral vision. The feature not only sharpened normal or 20/20 vision, but also assisted people who were short- or farsighted. An ingenious split strap prevented the goggles from falling when the wearer bent down or looked up.

Où:

These snow goggles were probably used by Forbes D. Sutherland (born about 1879), a constable with the NWMP, on his routine expeditions around Herschel Island (Yukon).

Quand:

These snow goggles were made around 1902.

Qui:

These snow goggles were carved by an Inuvialuit man (Inuit of the Mackenzie River District).
Modèles réduit de lampe et de marmite
Arctique central  
Inuit  
Anonyme - Anonymous  
Vers 1915, 20e siècle  
1.2 x 2.1 x 6.5 cm  
Don de J. J. O'Neill  
ME982X.329.1-2  
© Musée McCord

Clefs de l’histoire:

Many members of the scientific staff of the Canadian Arctic Expedition, 1913-18, were officers of the Geological Survey of Canada, working under the direction of the Department of the Naval Service. Because the expedition was mandated to work in two distinct regions at some distance from each other, it was divided into two parties, a southern and a northern party.

J. J. O'Neill (1886-1965) was a geologist with the Southern Party of the Canadian Arctic Expedition, 1913-18, along with ethnologist Diamond Jenness and several others, including the director, R. M. Anderson. The Southern Party mandate was to undertake a three-year study of the Arctic mainland and the adjacent islands. O'Neill's report on the geology of the Arctic coast of Canada was published in 1924. And in 1922 Diamond Jenness published his report on the Kilusiktormiut (Coronation Gulf, Northwest Territories), among whom he had lived for three years. The Northern Party, directed by Vilhjálmur Stefánsson, travelled around the Beaufort Sea and Arctic Archipelago. This expedition ended in disaster when the ship the men were traveling on, the Karluk, was crushed in the ice and eleven of them died.

Quoi:

This lamp and pot are models of two very important Inuit household items. A stone lamp provided not only light during the long winter days, but also warmth inside snow houses. The lamp, which sat on a cooking platform and contained lit seal or whale oil, was used to heat the cooking pot. Since sources of soapstone were rare, many Inuit obtained their lamps and pots through trade with other Inuit groups.

Où:

These models were collected in the vicinity of Victoria Island. The eastern two-thirds of the island is located in Nunavut, the western part is in the Northwest Territories.

Quand:

This model pot and model lamp were collected in 1915 by J. J. O'Neill.

Qui:

This model lamp and cooking pot were made by Kaijoranna, an Inuit from Victoria Island. They were collected by ethnologist Diamond Jenness, a member of the 1913-18 Canadian Arctic Expedition, and later given to J. J. O'Neill. Diamond Jenness published a report on the Kilusiktormiut in 1922.
Modèle de traîneau
Arctique de l'Est
Inuit: Nunavimiut
Anonyme - Anonymous
1911, 20e siècle
7.6 x 12.1 x 74.5 cm
Don de Mrs. James H. Peck
M928.26
© Musée McCord

Clefs de l'histoire:

Vilhjálmur Stefánsson (1879-1962), a Canadian born Arctic explorer, spent more than ten years in the Arctic, travelling 50,000 km by dogsled. He explored some of the world's major Arctic islands - Brock, Borden, Meighen and Lougheed islands - and claimed them for Canada. His first trip to the Arctic took place in 1906-07.

This first expedition was led by the Danish explorer Ejnar Mikkelsen and took the party to Herschel Island, where Stefánsson started studying the language and culture of the Inuit and Dene people of the Mackenzie Delta. He returned in 1908 with the Canadian zoologist Rudolph M. Anderson, again travelling to Herschel Island, Cape Parry and Victoria Island. There the party encountered a previously unknown Inuit community, the Kilusiktormiut (Copper Inuit, who were given this name because of their use of meteoritic copper in making tools). Stefánsson stayed among them until 1912 and published the book *My Life with the Eskimo* the following year.

Quoi:

Inuit travel throughout the year in search of food and other resources necessary for survival, but also to trade and visit with family and friends. In the winter months, dogsleds, which could carry heavy loads, were the only means of travel across the icy tundra. Dog teams were essential to the Inuit and later became essential for European explorers, not only for transportation, but also for hunting and, on occasion, as an emergency food supply.

Où:

This model sled was collected in Kuujjuaq (formerly Fort Chimo), Nunavik.

Quand:

This model sled was collected in 1911.

Qui:
This sled was made by a Nunavimut artist (Nunavik) and probably sold to Mrs. James Peck, one of the founders of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild.
Conclusion:

Bibliography


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The exploration of the Arctic for petroleum is considered to be extremely technically challenging. However, recent technological developments, as well as relatively high oil prices, have allowed for exploration. As a result, the region has received significant interest from the petroleum industry. Since the onset of the 2010s oil glut in 2014, the commercial interest in Arctic exploration has declined. The Canadian Arctic is also well known for its diverse wildlife, history and rich Inuit culture. It is home to seals, whales, polar bears, caribou, musk ox, walruses, Arctic wolves and foxes as well as thousands of seabirds that nest in the cliffs. Encounter small indigenous communities and the archaeological remains of hunting lodges that date back thousands of years. Vast reserves of oil and also natural gas are believed to lie above the Arctic Circle and oil exploration and drilling are huge threats to the Canadian Arctic. Drilling not only destructs the environment but it also poses a threat to the subsistence lifestyles of the Inuit. The clearing and logging of huge tracts of land results in loss of habitat for the wildlife on which the Inuit depend for hunting and trapping.