

Nuvumiutaq

Canadian Geographic's November/December 2017 issue highlights the story of an 800-year-old Thule man and how forensics and traditional knowledge from the community of Arctic Bay, Nunavut, helped to tell the story of this Inuit ancestor. Use this infographic and the following questions to learn more about what life was like in the Canadian Arctic centuries before Canada was ever considered a country.



Check for understanding

1. Where was Nuvumiutaq found?

2. What is the historical significance of this discovery? What can we learn from this discovery?

3. How was Nuvumiutaq's face reconstructed for the exhibit and who was involved in the work?

4. What did Nuvumiutaq's bones reveal about the life of this Inuit ancestor?

5. What is the significance of the bow drill?

Nuvumiutaq

Extend your geographical thinking

1. Comparing the past to the present

The discovery of Nuvumiutaq brought a new understanding of how Inuit ancestors hunted, dressed, ate and spent their time 800 years ago. Research and learn more about life in present-day Inuit communities on Baffin Island. What similarities and differences do you observe in comparison to Nuvumiutaq's lifestyle from 800 years ago?

2. The importance of traditional knowledge

Traditional knowledge plays a significant role in the lives and cultural identity of Inuit people. Traditional knowledge, also called Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit in Inuktitut (Khao-yee-muh-yah-tut-khanggeet), is a source of information based on historical and/or current observations by Inuit, which is passed down orally through the generations. Research and learn more about how the Inuit are using traditional knowledge to help the government of Canada learn more about the North. Explore the following themes:

- a. Climate change
- b. Traditional hunting practices
- c. Research and data collection
- d. Animal migration routes
- e. Sea ice

Resources

- [IQ Inuit knowledge center](#)
- [Education Framework Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit](#)
- [Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami](#)
- [Museum Routes- For Exploring First Nations and Inuit Cultures](#)
- [Through Mala's Eyes: Life in an Inuit Community](#)
- [Virtual Museum: Inuit Culture](#)

Nuvumiutaq

How the Canadian Museum of History and the community of Arctic Bay are telling the real story of an Inuit ancestor

By Nick Walker

Archeologists found his remains in a stone cairn on northern Baffin Island in 1959 and, as would never be done today, they took them south for study and storage. The Inuit Heritage Trust is now leading the repatriation of this Thule man's 800-year-old bones and belongings from the Canadian Museum of History in Gatineau, Que., to his homeland, but in the meantime, the people of Arctic Bay, Nunavut, the museum and a French forensic artist have worked together to create this lifelike figure of what he looked like. Given the name *Nuvumiutaq* (simply, "person from the peninsula") by Arctic Bay elders, he now stands in the museum's new Canadian History Hall.

Around the time he hunted in the waters off northern Baffin Island, Crusades began and ended in the eastern Mediterranean and Genghis rose to power as Great Khan of the Mongols. European sails would not appear in the Northwest Passage for another four centuries. Read on to find out how forensics, traditional knowledge and clues left by Nuvumiutaq himself came together to give this Inuit ancestor new life.

BONES The formation and tendon attachments of Nuvumiutaq's clavicle, scapula, wrist and leg bones are consistent with those of a frequent, skilled kayaker, and it's evident that he regularly carried a heavy weight in his elevated left hand (a harpoon). He would have hunted caribou that had been driven into the water from his kayak, and bowhead whales and possibly narwhal from a larger craft called an *umiak*.

WALKING STICK That Nuvumiutaq would have depended on a walking stick is an educated guess. His bones show multiple signs of trauma, from whiplash and back injuries to broken ribs (possibly having been struck by a whale's tail while hunting), and one ankle never had the opportunity to knit.

Original name Unknown
Died circa AD 1200
Approximate age 40
Height 157.5–162.5 cm. (5'2"–5'4")
Home Today's Borden Peninsula and surroundings, near Arctic Bay, Baffin Island
Craft Hunter, kayaker
Culture Thule, direct ancestors of modern Inuit; occupied Arctic Canada AD 1000-1600

HEAD AND BODY No actual remains were used in the exhibit, of course, and out of respect, Nuvumiutaq's bones were handled as little as possible during analysis and laser scanning. Elizabeth Daynès, a renowned forensic artist in France, built his face using a 3D-printed skull provided by the museum, and developed with the Arctic Bay community a visage that made him "look proud, looking out on the land, remembering his past."

CLOTHING Seamstress Olayuk Kigutikakjuk of Arctic Bay sewed the traditional sealskin parka (Arctic spring and summer wear) from the skins of four ringed seals.

THE BOW DRILL In the toolkit buried with Nuvumiutaq was a walrus-ivory bow drill, used to bore holes or start fires by pulling a hide string back and forth to spin a drill shaft (the replica shown here is relative to his height). Etched into it are potentially autobiographical scenes, including kayaking, bow hunting and caribou, sex, people with walking sticks and children.



Teachers! Bring this and other science innovations into your classroom by visiting cangeoeducation.ca/resources.