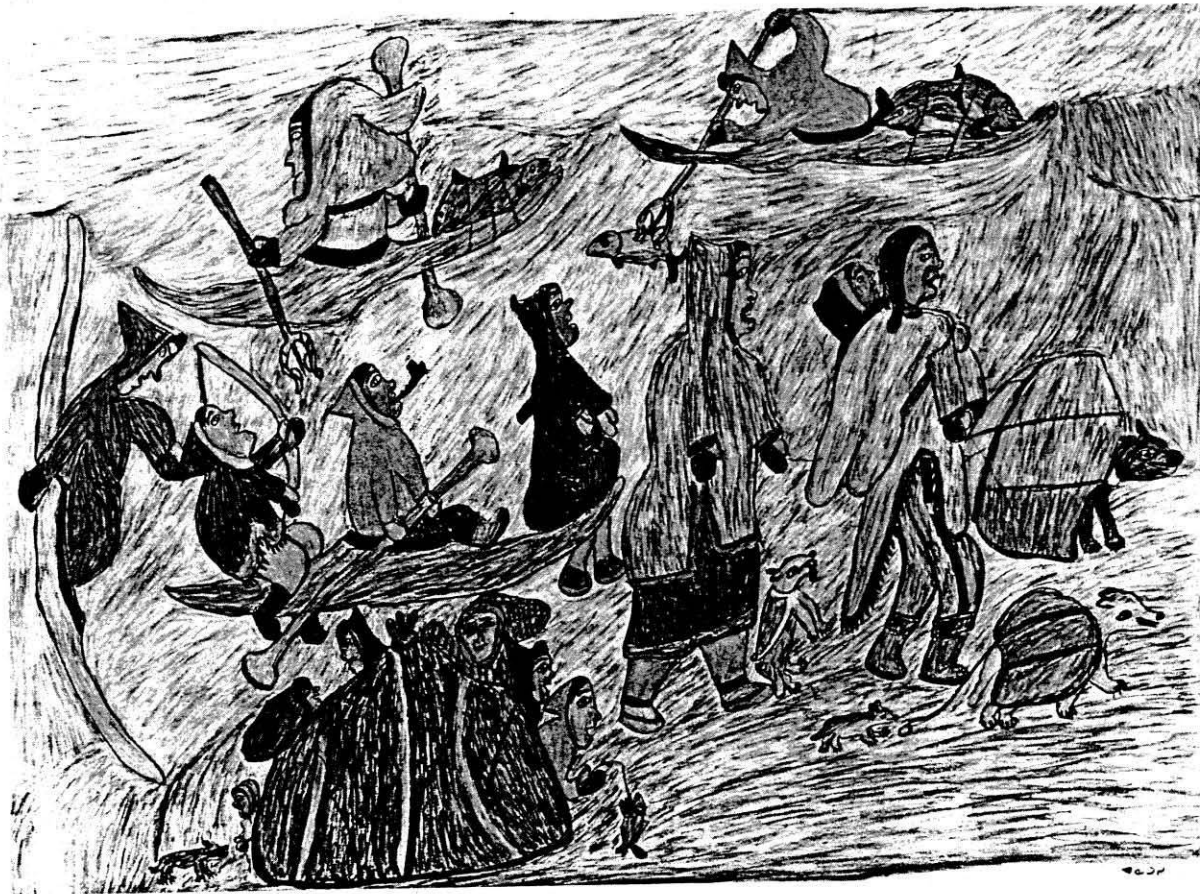




qikaaluktut



Long before we white men appeared on the barrens with our ABS high-tech specials, there was another watercraft skimming over the lakes and rivers which dot the tundra. The kayak of the inland Inuit was made of two materials: caribou and wood. The wood came mostly from the upper reaches of the Thelon and Kazan Rivers; indeed the pursuit of that wood goes a long way to explaining why the coastal people ventured inland in the first place. The caribou of the barrens provided the hide to be stretched over the wood and bone frame.

Over two years of working on *QIKAALUKTUT: Images of Inuit Life* with the people of Baker Lake, I learned—it will not surprise you to know—a great deal. The elders taught me about how they had lived on the land, how they hunted, how they ate, how the women gave birth, how they buried the dead, and how they starved. But one theme reappeared time and again: how they travelled. Mobility was essential for survival. One followed one's source of food, the caribou.

For seven or eight months of the year, travel was straight-forward. A dog-team and sled could take you anywhere. During freeze-up and break-up travel was awkward. But for two or three months every summer, the main method of travel was the kayak. The following excerpts from the stories in *QIKAALUKTUT*, accompanied by Ruth Annaqtuusi Tulurialik's drawings, illustrate the former place of the kayak in the life cycle of the inland Inuit.

Ruth Annaqtuusi Tulurialik's drawings are reproduced here with the artist's permission, from photographs supplied by the Department of Indian & Northern Affairs. (The original drawings are in color.) The stories are excerpted from *QIKAALUKTUT: Images of Inuit Life* by Ruth Annaqtuusi Tulurialik and W.C.A. member David F. Pelly, published by Oxford University Press (Canada) Ltd., 1986.