

The Montagnais and the Naskapi

1. Description

- 1.1 Name of society, language, and language family: Naskapi and Montagnais (alternative names: Innu, Innu Aimun), Montagnais, Algic, Algonquian, Central, Cree-Montagnais-Naskapi
- 1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com): nsk,moe
- 1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): The Montagnais-Naskapi occupied a vast area of the Labrador Peninsula extending from the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the lower St. Lawrence River north to Ungava Bay and northwest to James and Hudson bays. The Montagnais occupied the southern part of this region, the Naskapi the northern part. (7)
- 1.4 Brief history: It is not known when the Naskapi occupied the area they are in now (Labrador peninsula) but did live there upon the first contact with European settlers, and have been controlled by trading with Europeans ever since. (2)
- 1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors:
- 1.6 Ecology: barren coasts and spruce-dominant forested interior, rises from south to north to a rolling, glaciated plateau dotted by numerous lakes, swamps, and bogs. To the extreme north of the plateau the tree line is reached and eventually the plateau is devoid of all plant life except lichens. Winters in Labrador are long and cold, summers cool and short. Precipitation on the peninsula is relatively high for its altitude and tends to be highest near the coasts. (1)
- 1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density. Twelve thousand (1); 50 people per unit during the winter, 150-300 in the summer (4) (12)

2. Economy

- 2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): Fruits, berries, and tubers (5) (9)
- 2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: Caribou, moose, bear, fox, hare, squirrel, porcupine, eel, fish, beaver, fowl (5) (9)
- 2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?: Bow and arrow, also simple snares, heavy and light spears, clubs and shields, knives (5) (9)
- 2.4 Food storage: Birch bark containers and baskets, or manufactured storage devices purchased from trading post (9)
- 2.5 Sexual division of production: Men trapped and hunted; women processed hides, made clothes, prepared food, and cared for children (5)
- 2.6 Land tenure: Different familial units occupied different areas and hunting territories, the hunting territories remained in the family till of if it went extinct it which case it would go to the chief at the time to be given to a new family, but land tenure was not extremely prevalent until European involvement. (5)
- 2.7 Ceramics: Not certain on ceramics, but woven baskets and animal bones are used as food vessels (7)
- 2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:
- 2.9 Food taboos: Yes, individual and some permanent, if a man killed a bear only he was allowed to eat the heart no women could eat it. And individually if they had a bad feeling about eating something then they would not eat it, also proper disposal of animal bones (3)
- 2.10 Canoes/watercraft? Canoes for hunting (9)

3. Anthropometry

- 3.1 Mean adult height (m and f): males 166.2 cm and females 154.6 cm
- 3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f):

4. Life History, mating, marriage

- 4.1 Age at menarche (f): 14-15 years of age (8)
- 4.2 Age at first birth (m and f): usually depends on when they are married, as premarital relations were not common, so between 14 or 15-20 (8)
- 4.3 Completed family size (m and f): 4-10 (8)
- 4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f):
- 4.5 Age first marriage (m and f): males 18-22 (when he was able enough to provide for a family) females 13-20 (13)
- 4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce: divorce was practiced and not looked down upon, it could be dissolved by either party male or female for such reasons as cruelty or the inability to provide for or take care of the family/household. Was still uncommon (8)
- 4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously: Polygyny was practiced but was not very common, the man has to be able to provide for and have the status (like a chieftain) in order to take multiple wives (8)

- 4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?: Conflicting information was found here, some said that there was no bride price or dowry, some say that gift can help sway the parents of the girl to be married in favor of one suitor or another, and others say that gift were expected to be given (8)
- 4.9 Inheritance patterns: Usually the son inherited all of his fathers possessions upon his death, however if the eldest son was still too young then the mother would retain the property until the boy came of age. Also some evidence of matrilineal inheritance where the mother's son can inherit his uncle's possessions (13)
- 4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict: Generosity, everyone chipped in, and more social pressure to punish than physical reprimand. (6)
- 4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:
- 4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy): Both were permitted with contact with "whites" it was not uncommon to have a union outside of the group, but in later times marriage is restricted to being within the group (6)
- 4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these "other fathers" recognized? It was believed that the fetus was nourished by the man's sperm since sexual intercourse was not prohibited while the female was pregnant. (8)
- 4.14 What is the belief of the mother's role in procreation exactly? (e.g., "receptacle in which fetus grows") Basic the receptacle in which the fetus grew
- 4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)?
- 4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape. There are or were cases of rape, couldn't find any figures on the occurrence, but rape was not considered a crime that was punished or that carried any punishment.
- 4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin) Bilateral, traditionally cross cousin
- 4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms? They seem to have somewhat of a say in whom they marry, but once married they were closely watched even more so then before they were married and husband cold and would become easily jealous. (13)
- Premarital sex was prohibited, although not totally strictly, it was froned upon at newly mature women were closely watched.
- 4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring. There were extramarital partners but no evidence of gift giving. However is a child was born out of wedlock it was usually the responsibility of the father if not married to marry the women that he impregnated, or if he was married and had the ability and the status to have multiple wives was to take on the women.
- 4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children? Usually it was the father, and if he were dead the elder sibling would raise them, being that they were able to support the family. Then it went to either a brother (uncle) of the mother (13)
- 4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females
- 4.22 Evidence for couvades
- 4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older)
- 4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?
- 4.24 Joking relationships? Yes
- 4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations. Bilateral (13)
- 4.26 Incest avoidance rules. Incest was prohibited (8)
- 4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony? Traditionally the marriage not formal, and the ceremony was the man acceptance of the women, it wasn't until the missionaries that more formal wedding ceremonies took place. (13)
- 4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name? Indian names were given at or around the birth of the child based on the things that were happening around them or specific things that happened to the child for instance a gun fell into the babies crib and he was named Baschikennabesh (Boy of the Gun). Christian names were given after the missionaries arrived after the baptism. People that were sick, they thought an evil spirit was the one causing the illness and so by changing the name it would no longer be able to afflict you could change names. Names of great warriors were transferred upon their death to another warrior; this was done with other very highly regarded men and chieftains. (13)
- 4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?) usually within the community for both sexes, but it also depends of the size of the group smaller groups sometimes had to go outside of the group because of issues of relatedness (6)
- 4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)? Marriages are arranged by the parents, usually that of the female (13)
- 4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who: Some girls objected to being married in which case they could be taken by force. And if the parents were trying to arrange a marriage when the women loved someone else and that man loved her back they would marry each other possibly in spite of the parents wishes.

Warfare/homicide

- 4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:
- 4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death:
- 4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing: One report I found was a killing by strangulation of a son by his father that feared that he might become possessed and turn into a cannibal. Alcoholism and European influence were the main causes of in-group conflict no real history of out of group conflict. (4)
- 4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations): European neighbors (large settlements of European trappers and traders) but no real conflict with neighbors. (4)
- 4.18 Cannibalism? Possibly it was believed that a person could be possessed by an evil spirit and become a cannibal, but no direct data as to whether is happen for sure or not. (10)

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

- 5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size: 50 during winter, 150-300 during summer
- 5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality): Mobile summer-winter. In the winter they would split into smaller family or close kin and friend groups and go to their designated hunting territories
- 5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes): Issues were solved by group discussion, and most skilled person took a leading position at that task, usually the best hunter was given the title of headsmen or chief and was in charge of making final decisions usually of the family groups, this position changed from year to year (4)
- 5.4 Post marital residence: Not clearly defined (6)
- 5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense): Only after European influence. (4)
- 5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex):
- 5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships: Very communal, very generous people
- 5.8 Village and house organization:
- 5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses): No (4)
- 5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere? Probably on the ground, home was a sort of teepee
- 5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc: Hunting groups and units of multiple families stayed together. (4)
- 5.12 Trade: Some between groups of different geographic areas, major fur trade with Europeans (5)
- 5.13 Indications of social hierarchies? Not really besides the headsmen and maybe the shamans but shamans did not pass on their skills directly to their offspring (4)

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

- 6 Time allocation to RCR:
- 6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine): 1 Shamans (3) and certain rituals they saw as medicine, such as blood letting, plucking the hair from the crown of the head and rubbing herbs or gunpowder in the wound to cure headaches.
- 6.2 Stimulants:
- 6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal):
- 6.4 Other rituals: Ceremonies after the killing of an animal, also some rituals but were localized per unit. Also, autumn drum rituals in some groups (3)
- 6.5 Myths (Creation):
- 6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games): Hunting songs and some special clothes for rituals (striped sleeves, and a double curve motif on robes) (3)
- 6.7 Sex differences in RCR: Both men and women could become shamans; also religion was an individual experience. (3)
- 6.8 Missionary effect: Hybrid religion, baptism and naming of the children, and more Christian wedding ceremonies at churches instead of in the woods
- 6.9 RCR revival:
- 6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs: Went to the Home of The Dead, in the west (3)
- 6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?
- 6.12 Is there teknonymy?
- 6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.) Every object has a spirit, and one obtains communication with these objects over time. (3)

7. Adornment

- 7.1 Body paint: Yes, it was observed that the men would paint their faces red, black and blue
- 7.2 Piercings: Yes, mainly of the ears (11)
- 7.3 Haircut: Women wore their hair wrapped around small wooden blocks hanging over each ear and tied to them with ribbons, or up in braids. Men wore their hair either bobbed at the neck or still longer, with a band to keep it out of their eyes. (11)
- 7.4 Scarification: 4 Yes, this was their way of tattooing, I only found evidence that the men received tattoos, scarification. They are generally tattooed from the cheekbone to the nostril on either side. They consisted of slight cuts made by a flint of a knife and the juices of some herbs or gunpowder is rubbed into it to make it permanent. Women on the coast might have been tattooed as well but no visible marks were seen. (11)
- 7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.): Vermillion and red oxide or mercury were used for red paint, beads were also used (11)
- 7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment: Robes and special sleeves were made for ceremonial purposes. (3)
- 7.7 Sex differences in adornment: Both sexes wear very similar types of clothing but with little variations to make distinguish between the sexes (11)
- 7.8 Missionary effect: Hybrid religion
- 7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:

8. Kinship systems

- 8.1 Sibling classification system:
- 8.2 Sororate, levirate: Both occur, and were permitted and somewhat common (6)
- 8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.):

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

A person was not supposed to remarry within three years of the death of a spouse, or the relatives of the dead person regarded it as an affront. If a woman remarried within three years without the permission of the dead man's relatives, they not only bore her ill-will, but also took the shell necklaces and everything else of value belonging to the woman's new husband.

Numbered references

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After talking to you the other day and after comparing my information with Eric's and with you permission we decided to combine our information into one questionnaire. Really the only difference that we saw was that the Naskapi lived a little farther to the north than the Montagnais and the fact that they speak a different language or dialect.