

THE WCR LEARNING COMMUNITY

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Canada



WelcomeBC



Andrew in a skin on frame kayak
Photo courtesy of Cape Falcon kayak

Kayaks: from the old to the new

Adapted from *Wikipedia* and Links below

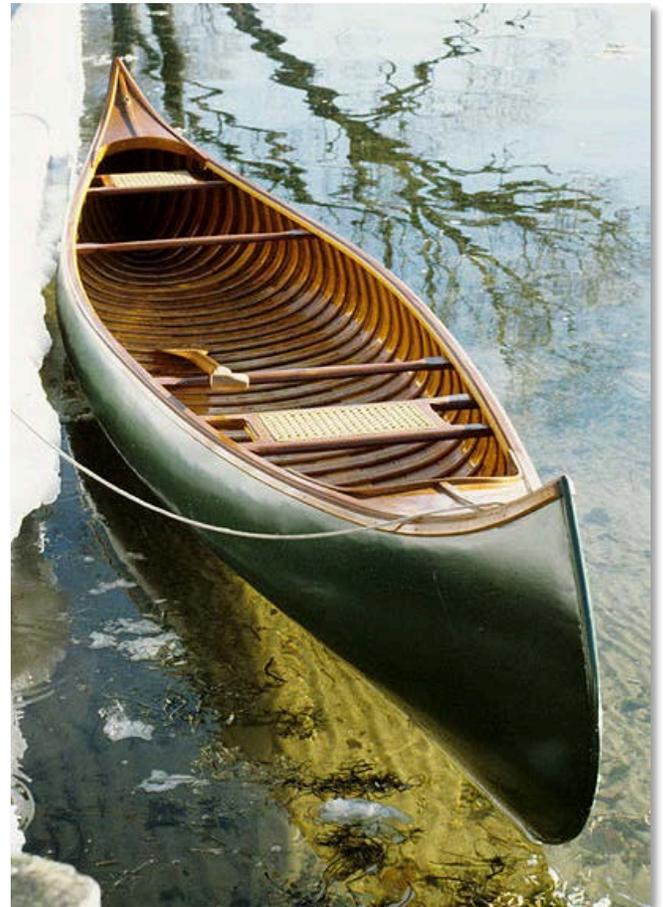
Level 3

Many people in Canada love to be outdoors. Some like to paddle on B.C.'s lakes or on oceans nearby. A favorite boat of outdoor people is the canoe. The word "canoe" came from *kenu* in the Carib language, and *canoa* from Spanish. These words mean "dugout". A dugout is a boat made from a log. Another favorite boat is the *kayak*. Kayak is a word from the Inuit people. It means "man's boat".

The story of kayaks

Kayaks are at least 4,000 years old. Over 7,000 years ago, humans left Siberia

and travelled to Alaska. They moved into northern Canada and east to Greenland. The land they found was frozen and **barren**. But these people survived and they **thrived**. These people were called **Inuit**.



A canoe
Photo by User-Motorrad-67

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The common good

The Inuit believed in “working for the common good”. They shared what they had. They served and cared for others. No one was above anyone else in the group. Each person was responsible to the others in the group.

Respect for all living things

The Inuit respected all living things, plant and animal. They used stories to explain life and to teach lessons. There was no written language then.

Search for food

Inuit often searched for food in the **frigid** oceans. The western Inuit used **driftwood** for their boat frames. In the east, they used whale bone because no trees grew. Animal skins covered these frames. Small covered boats were for hunting seals, otters, caribou and fish. Open, larger kayaks carried many passengers and goods.

Man’s boat

Each man made his own kayak. The length was three times the span of his outstretched arms. The width of the opening was the width of his hips plus two fists. The boat was as deep as his fist plus his outstretched thumb. So, most kayaks were 6.2 m long, 51 - 56 cm wide and 18 cm deep.

Modern builder, old method

Some modern kayakers still use the “skin on frame” method. Brian Schulz owns Cape Falcon Kayak on the Oregon Coast in the U.S.

He uses cedar for the frame, bamboo for the ribs and nylon for the skin. He will teach you to build your own, if you like. For \$1,300 and a week of work, you can have a kayak and a paddle. His kayakers weigh about 12 kg.



Modern skin on frame kayak seen from the inside, at Cape Falcon Kayak
Photo courtesy of Cape Falcon kayak

Wood strip kayaks

Jürgen Köppen spends about 350 hours building each of his kayaks. He uses different kinds of wood strips. Wood kayakers are much heavier. You can choose a style of kayak which suits your needs. His kayakers are works of art with beautiful designs on them.



Jürgen with a 17 ft. wood kayak on his B.C. property
Photo courtesy of Jürgen Köppen

(Vocabulary and Links are on the next page.)

Vocabulary:

- **barren:** without useful living things growing on it
- **thrived:** grew and developed well
- **Inuit:** (in - yew - it)
- **frigid:** very cold in temperature
- **driftwood:** wood floating in the water or lying on the shore

Learn new words:

We use other words in English from

Inuktitut, the Inuit language. Inuktitut is the official language of Nunavut and the Northwest Territories in Canada's north.

- Say (i - **nook** - ti - tut)
- **igloo:** a small building with a curved roof, made out of blocks of packed snow
- **mukluks:** insulated boots made of reindeer or seal skins (see link Travelling in the Arctic)

Links:

Umiaks: (large open kayaks):

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Umiak>

Travelling in the Arctic:

<http://www.wou.edu/provost/library/exhibits/exhibits2007-08/Wayward/Wayward.htm>

Inuit alphabet: Inuktitut (click on "Language")

http://www.rrsss17.gouv.qc.ca/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=56%3Ales-arts-au-nunavik&catid=41%3Apeople-et-culture-inuit&Itemid=71&lang=en

Modern kayaks – Builder Jürgen Köppen:

<http://www.cedar-strip.com/>

Builder and teacher Brian Shulz:

<http://www.capefalconkayak.com/Origins%20of%20kayaking.html>