

# information

## Frequently Asked Questions about the North

March 2000

**E**ach year the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) gets thousands of enquiries from the general public that relate to the Canadian North. This information sheet brings together the answers to some of the most frequently asked questions.

### What is the North?

The Canadian North consists of all land above the 60th parallel. However, DIAND's responsibilities in the North apply only to the Yukon Territory, the Northwest Territories (NWT) and Nunavut, not to the parts of Quebec and Labrador that lie north of the 60th parallel.

### What does DIAND do in the North?

As Canada's lead federal government department responsible for management of land and resources in the North, DIAND works together with northerners on many fronts to bring about the kinds of changes territorial residents want. DIAND's role in northern political development includes transferring management of provincial-type responsibilities to the territories and promoting

Aboriginal self-government. The department's responsibilities extend to helping protect the environment and managing the sustainable development of natural resources.

### Who lives in the North?

In the Yukon Territory, the population is about 77 percent non-Aboriginal people. Most of the 23 percent who are Aboriginal are members of First Nations. In the NWT, about 49 percent of the population is Aboriginal. They are Dene, Métis and Inuvialuit (Inuit of the western Arctic). In Nunavut, 85 percent of the population is Inuit.

### Who are Inuit?

Inuit means "people" in Inuktitut, their language. Most Inuit live in Nunavut, the NWT, Northern Quebec and Labrador.

### What does Inuktitut mean?

It means "in the manner of Inuit."

### What does Inuk mean?

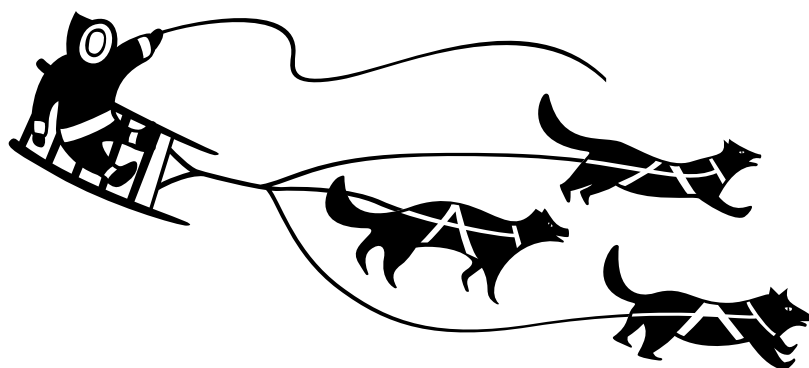
Inuk is the singular form of Inuit. Inuuk means two Inuit individuals. Inuit refers to three or more people.

### How many Inuit languages are there?

Just the one — Inuktitut. But there are more than 20 dialects.

### What are the written forms of Inuktitut?

There are two. One is based on syllabics (written signs that represent the syllables of a word), and has been used for 100 years. Most Inuit use syllabics when writing their language. Labrador Inuit, however, use an alphabet system.



**Do Inuit register to achieve status as Indians do?**

Inuit receive programs and services from the provincial and territorial governments.

**What is the Inuit population?**

About 55,700 Inuit live in 53 communities across the North. The Inuit population has grown rapidly over the past few decades. According to Statistics Canada, if present trends continue, there will be about 84,600 Inuit in the North by 2016.

**What does Nunavut mean?**

It means “our land” in Inuktitut.



**What is the territory of Nunavut?**

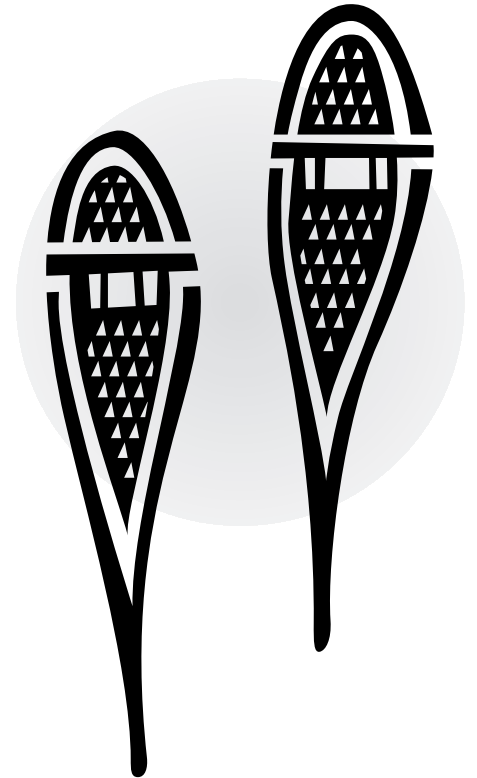
On April 1, 1999, the territory of Nunavut came into being when the former NWT was divided in two. The central and eastern part became Nunavut; the western part is still called the NWT. Both territories have their own public governments. The provision to establish the territory of Nunavut was part of the Nunavut Land Claim Agreement, signed in 1993. About 85 percent of Nunavut's population is Inuit. They govern a territory of more than 2 million square kilometres, one fifth of Canada's land mass.

**What materials and tools do Inuit sculptors use?**

Traditional Inuit sculptors work with local stone, weathered and fossilized whalebone, ivory and antlers. The most common medium is soapstone, which varies in colour from black to green. Traditional sculptors use axes, hammers and chisels to rough out a block of stone. They then finish the work using files, rasps and sandpaper.

**How do I know if my Inuit sculpture is authentic?**

The Government of Canada has registered the symbol of the Igloo as a trademark that identifies Inuit artwork as authentic. This trademark protects Inuit artists and buyers. Only Inuit artists or their agents can acquire the trademark Igloo stickers or tags.



**Does DIAND promote Inuit art?**

DIAND's Canadian Inuit Art Information Centre promotes Inuit artists. The centre keeps a research library on Inuit art, including artist biographies. It produces educational material on Inuit art, and provides advice to the general public, museums, and wholesale and retail galleries. DIAND also helps fund the Inuit Art Foundation, which assists Inuit artists.

**What are the musical traditions of Inuit?**

Inuit have a drum dance, which combines music, song, dance and stories. They also have a tradition of throat-singing: two women

face each other and make resonant sounds through voice manipulation and breathing techniques. These songs attempt to imitate the sounds of the northern lights, the seashore and the wind. Young Inuit singer/songwriters, such as Susan Aglukark, are making an impact on the contemporary music scene with songs in Inuktitut that tell of the joys, hardships and dreams of their people. "Country and western" type songs in Inuktitut are also growing increasingly popular in Inuit communities.

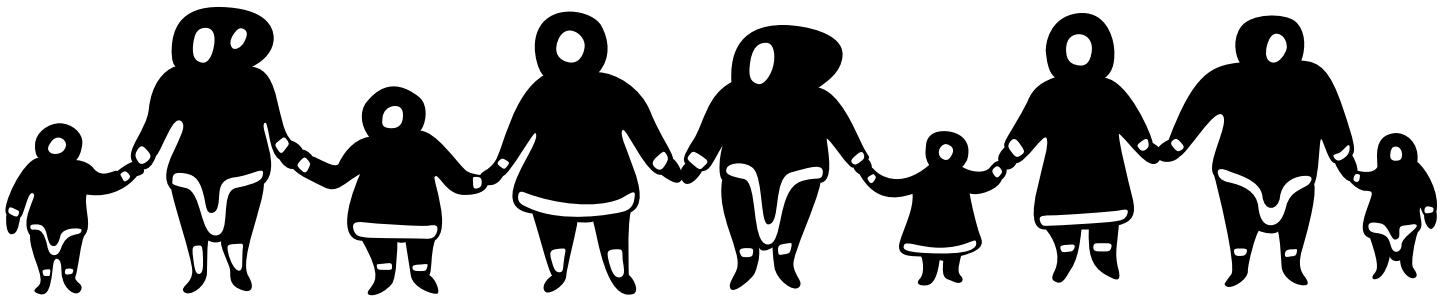
### Is mining an important activity in the North?

It is the most important business activity in the North, worth millions of dollars annually to the northern economy.

The Ekati Diamond Mine constructed by BHP Diamonds Inc. in the NWT will make mining of even greater importance in the northern economy.

### How can I find a job up North?

Contact your local Canada Employment Centre. Or check out the job listings in any of the following newspapers: *Yukon News*, *Whitehorse Star* or *L'Aurore Boréale* in Whitehorse, Yukon; *News North* in Yellowknife, NWT and *Nunatsiaq News* in Iqaluit, Nunavut. These papers may be available at your local library or newspaper shop. You could also check with the Human Resources Branches of the territorial governments. In addition, the Yukon, Nunavut and NWT governments have offices in Ottawa, and Web sites on the Internet.



## DEFINITIONS

**Aboriginal peoples:** The descendants of the original inhabitants of North America. The Canadian Constitution recognizes three groups of Aboriginal people – Indians, Métis people and Inuit. These are three separate peoples with unique heritages, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs.

**Aboriginal self-government:** Governments designed, established and administered by Aboriginal peoples.

**Métis:** People of mixed First Nation and European ancestry who identified themselves as Métis people, as distinct from First Nations people, Inuit or non-Aboriginal people. The Métis have a unique culture that draws on their diverse ancestral origins, such as Scottish, French, Ojibway and Cree.

**Status Indian:** An Indian person who is registered under the *Indian Act*. The act sets out the requirements for determining who is a Status Indian.



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