

# information

## Nunavut

March 2000

### **C**reation of the Nunavut territory

On April 1, 1999, the map of Canada was transformed when the former Northwest Territories (NWT) was divided in two. The territory is called Nunavut, which means “our land” in Inuktitut, the Inuit language.

Nunavut's lands take in the central and eastern portions of the former NWT. These are the traditional lands of Inuit who live in the Canadian North — lands their ancestors inhabited for thousands of years. The population of the territory is 85 percent Inuit.

The territory fulfils a long-time dream for Inuit of the Eastern Arctic. They govern a territory of about 2 million square kilometres, one fifth of Canada's total land mass.

The Nunavut government is a public government, elected by all residents, Inuit and non-Inuit. But because Inuit make up the majority of the population, they can shape the government to reflect their culture, traditions and goals. The government of Nunavut enables Inuit to assume their rightful place in Canada's federation and take charge of their own destiny.

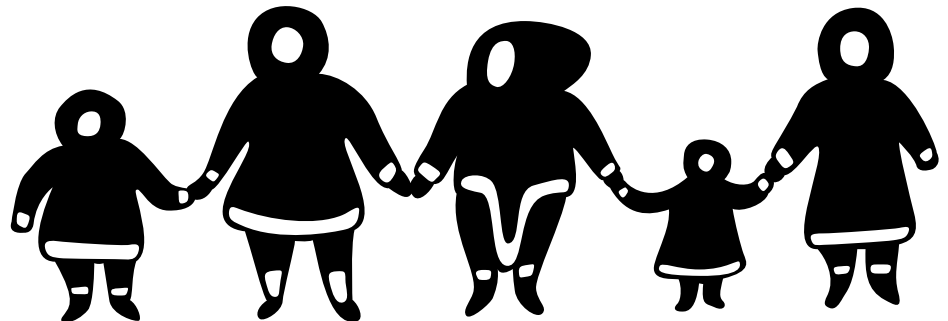
### **T**he largest land claim settlement in Canadian history

The federal and territorial governments and Inuit in the Eastern Arctic discussed the possible division of the NWT for many years. In 1976, the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (ITC) asked the federal government to map out a boundary between the eastern and western regions of the NWT. The ITC represents Inuit across Canada. It wanted the eastern region of the NWT to be the Nunavut Territory because of Inuit land claims in that area.

After years of negotiations, the Nunavut Land Claim Agreement was settled in 1993. It was the largest land claim ever settled in Canadian history. The settlement gives the Inuit control of more

than 350,000 square kilometres of land, of which 36,000 square kilometres include mineral rights. In addition, the land claim settlement provides the Inuit with more than \$1 billion over 14 years, and guaranteed participation in decisions on land and resource management.

The land claim settlement agreement included a provision to establish Nunavut “as soon as possible.” The governments of Canada and the NWT and the Tungavik Federation of Nunavut (which represented Nunavut Inuit during the land claim process) agreed to negotiate a political accord. The federal government also created the Nunavut Implementation Commission to oversee the implementation of the land claim settlement and prepare for the creation of the territory.



The political accord, signed in 1992, outlined how the government of the Nunavut Territory would operate. And it fixed 1999 as the year the territory would become a reality. In 1993, the Parliament of Canada passed the legislation enacting both the land claim settlement and the accord to create the territory of Nunavut — which would transform the map of Canada for the first time since Newfoundland joined Confederation in 1949.

### **T**aking on new challenges

The Nunavut government faces many challenges, including creating employment opportunities for a large workforce of young people. About 56 percent of Nunavut's population is under the age of 25. Other challenges facing the territory are how to increase residents' income and education levels, and find ways to cope with a cost of living that is two to three times higher than that of southern Canadians. The government of Nunavut enables residents of the territory to decide themselves how they want to meet these challenges. The government has powers like those of the other two

territorial governments. It has an elected legislative assembly, a cabinet and a territorial court. The capital of Nunavut is Iqaluit on Baffin Island.

To respond to the needs of its 28 far-flung communities, the Nunavut government is highly decentralized. Ten of its government departments are located in 11 different communities. Up-to-date communications technology plays an important role in this decentralized government structure.

The Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (the former Tungavik Federation of Nunavut), Nunavut Arctic College, the NWT government and the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development organized training programs to support preparation of Inuit for government and private sector jobs in the territory. These training programs focused on management, administration and support services.

Through their government, Nunavut residents are in charge of education, health, social services, and many other provincial-type responsibilities. The establishment of the government will help stimulate the regional economy, not only creating government jobs, but also spin-off jobs in the private sector.

The birth of the territory has opened the door for development corporations in businesses as diverse as shrimp fishing, hotels and construction. There are also possibilities for mining copper, gold, silver, lead, zinc and diamonds. The tourism industry is also likely to expand, especially as three new national parks are being created inside Nunavut.

### **A** chance for change in the west

The remaining western section of the NWT is still known as the Northwest Territories. The NWT has an elected territorial government with powers over education, social services, local government, housing and other programs.

The division of the NWT gives residents of the western Northwest Territories a chance to rethink their system of government. The Government of Canada supports a "made in the North" proposal for a new western NWT government. Until a proposal is approved, the current system of government remains in operation.

The division of the NWT brings in an exciting new era for northerners on both sides of the boundary line.

#### Nunavut Fast Facts

Area — 2 million square kilometres (about one fifth of Canada's land mass)

Population — 85 percent Inuit out of a total population of 25,000

Capital City — Iqaluit (population 4,500)

Geographic regions — Qikiqtaaluk, Kivalliq (formerly known as *Baffin* and *Keewatin*) and Kitikmeot

Communities — Nunavut has 28 communities of which Iqaluit is the largest

Parks — Three national parks are being created within Nunavut's borders

## 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.

**Inuit:** An Aboriginal people in northern Canada, who live above the tree line in Nunavut, the Northwest Territories, Northern Quebec and Labrador. The word means “people” in the Inuit language – Inuktitut. The singular of Inuit is Inuk.

**Land claims:** In 1973, the federal government recognized two broad cases of claims – comprehensive and specific. **Comprehensive claims** are based on the recognition that there are continuing Aboriginal rights to lands and natural resources. These kinds of claims come up in those parts of Canada where Aboriginal title has not previously been dealt with by treaty, and other legal means. The claims are called “comprehensive” because of their wide scope. They include such things as land title, fishing and trapping rights and financial compensation. **Specific claims** deal with specific grievances that First Nations may have regarding the fulfilment of treaties. Specific claims also cover grievances

relating to the administration of First Nations lands and assets under the *Indian Act*.

**The North:** Land in Canada located north of the 60<sup>th</sup> parallel. DIAND’s responsibilities for land and resources in the Canadian North relate only to Nunavut, the Northwest Territories and the Yukon.

### Publications and Public Enquiries

Department of Indian Affairs  
and Northern Development  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0H4

(819) 997-0380  
[www.inac.gc.ca](http://www.inac.gc.ca)

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