



Established 1999
3rd Territory

Did You Know?

- Close to the North Pole, the sun does not set for six months straight! During the winter, *Nunavummiut* (residents of Nunavut) experience the opposite effect, polar night, when it's dark for months at a time.
- *Nunavut* is the Inuktitut word for "our land."
- Iqaluit is the only city in Nunavut. Most communities are technically called *hamlets* (villages).
- There are only a few kilometres of highway in the whole territory! People travel between communities mostly by airplane, although they can travel by snowmobile in winter.
- Canada's only "four corners," the place where Manitoba, Saskatchewan, the Northwest Territories, and Nunavut all meet, is located in the remote northern wilderness, hundreds of kilometres from any town.
- The geographic centre of Canada is located in Nunavut at Baker Lake.
- The Inuit people have more than 20 different words for caribou.
- Nunavummiut say they live "north of 60" because the entire territory lies in the *Arctic Circle*, north of the 60th parallel of latitude.
- The Inuit language, Inuktitut, is written in *syllabics*, a writing system made up of a series of basic symbols.

Quick Facts

Capital city: Iqaluit

Population: 37,082

Total Area: 2,093,190 square kilometres (808,185 sq miles)

Population Density: 0.02 persons per square kilometre (0.05 per sq mile)

The Place

Climate

Nunavut has the coldest weather in Canada, with winter lasting about nine months. The territory experiences long days in the summer and long nights in the winter. In fact, north of the *Arctic Circle* (a freezing cold zone about 66.5 degrees north of the equator) the sun never goes down during the *summer solstice* (21 June) and never comes up during the *winter solstice* (21 December). Iqaluit, the capital city, sees about four hours of daylight in January and twenty hours in July! Summers are quite cool and winters are freezing. The average temperature in July is below 10°C (50°F). It is so cold in Nunavut that most of the land is *permafrost*, or permanently frozen ground. Winter blizzards are common and sometimes cause *whiteouts*, where you lose your sense of depth perception and can't tell how far away things are. Temperatures average around -32°C (-25°F) during the winter months.



Average Seasonal High and Low Temperatures

Spring: -14/-22°C

Summer: 10/3°C

Fall: -5/-11°C

Winter: -23/-30°C

Geography

Nunavut is Canada's largest territory. It takes up almost 20 percent of the country and covers 2,093,190 square kilometres (808,185 square miles). That's bigger than the states of Alaska and California put together! The majority of the territory lies above the *Arctic Circle* (a freezing zone about 66.5 degrees north of the equator). Nunavut has two main geographic regions: the Canadian Shield, a large section of ancient rock stretching across northeastern Canada, and the Arctic Lands, an area of rugged mountains around the Arctic Ocean. The Arctic Lands area includes several islands in the Arctic Archipelago. One is Ellesmere Island, which has mountains covered in a thick layer of ice leftover from the last ice age. Thousands of years ago, a huge glacier called the Wisconsin Ice Sheet covered the Nunavut area. Barbeau Peak, Nunavut's highest mountain at 2,616 metres (8,583 feet), is on Ellesmere Island. Nettilling Lake and Amadjuak Lake are two of the largest lakes in the territory and are located on Baffin Island—the largest island in Canada. Iqaluit, the capital city and largest community in the territory, is also on Baffin Island at Frobisher Bay.



Wildlife

Just like the people who live there, the animals of Nunavut must be strong and able to change to survive in the harsh climate. Grizzly bears and wolves roam the *tundra* (frozen, treeless ground) following herds of caribou. The marine life in the oceans surrounding the territory is very plentiful. Seals, walrus, and beluga whales are commonly found in the waters, and polar bears, which are excellent swimmers, can often be found resting on icebergs while they hunt for seals to eat.



Flora and Fauna

Common Animals

- Arctic char
- Arctic fox
- Arctic ground squirrel
- Caribou
- Golden eagle
- Grayling
- Grizzly bear
- Gyrfalcon
- Lake trout
- Lemming
- Musk-ox
- Narwhale
- Peregrine
- Pike
- Polar bear
- Sandhill crane
- Seal
- Snow geese
- Snowy owl
- Tundra swan
- Walrus
- Wolf

Common Plants

- Arctic poppy
- Crowberry
- Dwarf willow and birch
- Heather
- Labrador tea
- Lichens
- Mountain avens
- Mountain sorrel
- Purple saxifrage
- Sedges
- Woolly lousewort

Endangered Animals

Beluga whale
Eskimo curlew
Ivory gull
Peary caribou

Endangered Plants

Porsild's bryum

Environmental Issues

Climate Change

Nunavut, along with the other northern territories, faces many problems concerning global warming. As the earth's atmosphere warms, coastal areas *erode* (break down) and *permafrost* (permanently frozen ground) melts. Melting *permafrost* makes nearby buildings and roadways unsafe. It also sends mercury into the waters, which can cause problems for the marine life.

Climate changes have also changed the traditional way Inuit live in Nunavut, so their culture must adapt, usually with not enough resources, to new circumstances and weather patterns. The territory is trying to use more efficient energy sources, such as wind and *hydro* (water) power, to reduce emissions of *greenhouse gas* (gas in the atmosphere that absorbs and sends out radiation and affects the temperature of the earth). Scientists and researchers from around the world are using several methods, such as tracking arctic clouds and sampling ice cores in Nunavut, to research climate change.

Contamination Cleanup

For many years, Nunavut worked to clean up Resolution Island, an old U.S. military site in Nunavut's Baffin region. Since the 1950s, this area has been contaminated with *hazardous* (dangerous) wastes. It was one of the most contaminated places in northern Canada. The cleanup project was run by the Inuit through the Qikiqtaaluk Corporation and received some support from the federal government. Nunavut's workers created new landfills and cleaned up the hazardous wastes from the area. These people gained valuable work experience, which will help them secure other jobs in the future. Several more sites are currently under way as *hazardous* waste cleanup projects.

Resources and Industries



Agriculture

Country foods (locally caught fish and game) are an important food source for the residents of Nunavut because it is expensive to transport food into the territory from other places and because they support the connection the people feel to the land. The food that is flown in costs two or three times as much as it does in other parts of Canada. Caribou and seal are the source of food and clothing for many Nunavummiut. In the summer, people gather berries and edible plants such as mountain sorrel, but the climate does not permit growing food crops. In recent years, the fishing industry has been developed, and there are commercial fisheries for Greenland halibut, shrimp, Arctic char, and turbot.



Manufacturing

There are only a few small processing plants in Nunavut, so manufacturing jobs represent only about one percent of the territory's workforce. The factories that do operate usually process foods such as meat, fish, and other seafood. The territory is also developing dried food processing plants.



Mining

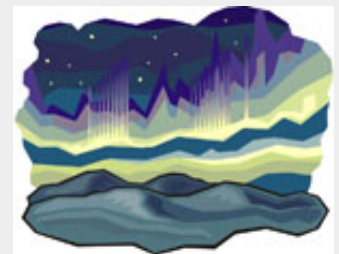
There are many mineral resources in Nunavut, but the climate and landscape make them difficult to mine. Exploration is now going on for diamonds, gold, iron ore, and uranium. Some former mines have been emptied and closed, while others such as the Jericho diamond mine have plans to reopen. Other important mines in the territory include a gold mine near Baker Lake and an iron ore mine at Mary River, near Pond Inlet on northern Baffin Island, which is under development.

History



Time Line

The ancestors of the Inuit arrive in North America	
2000 BC	
2000	The Pre-Dorset people come to the Arctic
AD 900	
AD 900–1200	Alaskan Inuit bands <i>migrate</i> (move from one area to another) to what is now Canada; the Thule people settle the Arctic Islands, and Scandinavian explorers land on Baffin Island
1500	



1576 English explorer Martin Frobisher lands on Baffin Island in search of gold and the Northwest Passage



1600

1670 The Hudson's Bay Company is formed



1800

1870 The Northwest Territories is established, including all of what is now Nunavut

1894 Reverend Edmund Peck establishes the first permanent Christian mission on Blacklead Island

1900

1903 The Royal Canadian Mounted Police establishes posts in the Northwest Territories





1957 The Distant Early Warning Line is completed



1971 The Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (ITC), a national political organization representing Inuit, is formed

1977 The Inuit Circumpolar Conference forms and meets every three years to discuss preserving Inuit culture, language, and interests

1979	Peter Ittinuar is elected the first Inuit member of Parliament	
1982	Residents vote to divide the Northwest Territories	
1992	An agreement is reached on the boundary between the Northwest Territories and Nunavut	
1993	The Nunavut Land Claims Agreement Act is passed	
1995	Voters choose Iqaluit as the capital of Nunavut	
1999	The Territory of Nunavut is established; Paul Okalik is elected the first premier of Nunavut and youngest premier in Canada	
2000		
2002	Nunavut hosts the Arctic Winter Games	
2007	The Canadian government announces it will build two new military bases in Nunavut to protect its interest in the Northwest Passage	
2009	The territory celebrates its 10th anniversary	
PRESENT		

Arctic Whalers

The earliest known inhabitants of the Arctic are called the Pre-Dorset people. They later became known as the Dorset people. These early peoples were hunters and probably lived year-round in tents made out of animal hides, double-layered for winter. The Dorset seem to have developed the *iglu* (snow house), which was used in hunting and travelling as a kind of winter tent.

Around 1000, the Thule people came to the Arctic Islands from what is now Alaska. The Thule were the ancestors of the Inuit. They were whalers and used harpoons to bring down their prey. The Thule lived together in villages along the coast and also hunted seal and walrus. These early peoples used sleds to travel and transport things from place to place. Many Arctic peoples believed in a life after death. They believed all living things had a spirit or soul, so they treated even the animals they killed for food with respect, in the hopes that their spirits would be able to move on in peace and perhaps come back to life in another form one day.



North of 60

Though Norse explorers reached the Arctic around the year 1000, it was British sea captain Martin Frobisher who started the real rush of European explorers to the area. Frobisher landed on Baffin Island in 1576 and claimed the land for England. Soon, other adventurers came in search of fur and whales. At the time, whales were worth hundreds of thousands of dollars, and their parts were used to make everything from soap to paint. But most of the newcomers did not learn to adapt to the freezing climate like the Inuit and their ancestors did. The majority of settlers gave up and returned home or died from exposure or starvation. The explorers also brought with them diseases that the Inuit had not been exposed to. Many Inuit died from diseases they caught from Europeans. In 1870, the newly formed Dominion of Canada bought Rupert's Land from the Hudson's Bay Company and combined it with the nearby North-western Territory. Together they formed the Northwest Territories, which included all of what is now Nunavut.



Missionaries

At the turn of the century, Christian missionaries began arriving in the Northwest Territories. Several years before, Reverend Edmund Peck established the first permanent Christian mission in what is now Nunavut on Blacklead Island. He introduced writing to the Inuit and began working on a system of writing Inuktitut. Up until this point, the Inuit language had only been spoken and was never written down. However, not all missionary influences were good. Many missionaries gave Inuit people new Christian names from the Bible in place of their traditional ones. They built *residential* (boarding) schools where children were forced to live and work away from their families. In many cases, these children lost touch with their families and culture.

In the 1940s, government officials began assigning numbers to the Inuit instead of using their given names. This only added to the stress, pain, and loss of identity the Inuit were already experiencing as their land and way of life were quickly changed.

The Distant Early Warning Line

After the start of World War II, the United States and Canada began building military posts in the Northwest Territories. The two countries were afraid German or Japanese planes would strike from over the North Pole. These military bases were intended to defend North America against such an attack and make it easier to transport planes to bases in the United Kingdom.

After the war ended, the Soviet Union became a possible threat, so the United States and Canada began building a chain of airfields and radar stations known as the Distant Early Warning Line, or DEW line, meant to detect Soviet missiles. This chain of stations ran from Baffin Island all the way to Alaska, covering approximately 10,000 kilometres (6,214 miles). The project was huge and employed thousands of people. Many Inuit left their traditional trapping and hunting lifestyle to get paid cash for working to build the DEW line.



Inuit Relocation to Settlements

In the 1950s, the Canadian government wanted Inuit to leave their camps and homes and move to more established settlements. If Inuit agreed to move to these permanent communities, the government said it would provide them with money, food, shelter, health care, and education. However, with these benefits came a loss of freedom and responsibility. The government threatened to take away this support if Inuit did not agree, so many were forced to move to these communities and place their children in government schools in order to survive.



Government officials and workers from southern Canada took over governing the Inuit, and traditional elders and leaders felt they no longer had a place or role to fill among their people. Their pride and sense of purpose taken away, many Inuit felt like they had no control over their lives. Alcohol, drugs, and suicide quickly became enormous problems within these communities where some Inuit had been made so dependent on the government for their everyday needs.

The Dream of Nunavut

The dream of creating a new territory began in the 1970s among a group of young Inuit leaders. They filed a land claim on their ancestral lands in the Arctic in the hopes that it might be possible to create a new territory out of the lands in the Northwest Territories where Inuit made up the majority of the population. This meant that all Northerners would have to vote and agree to split the territory in two, the eastern portion forming the new territory known as Nunavut.



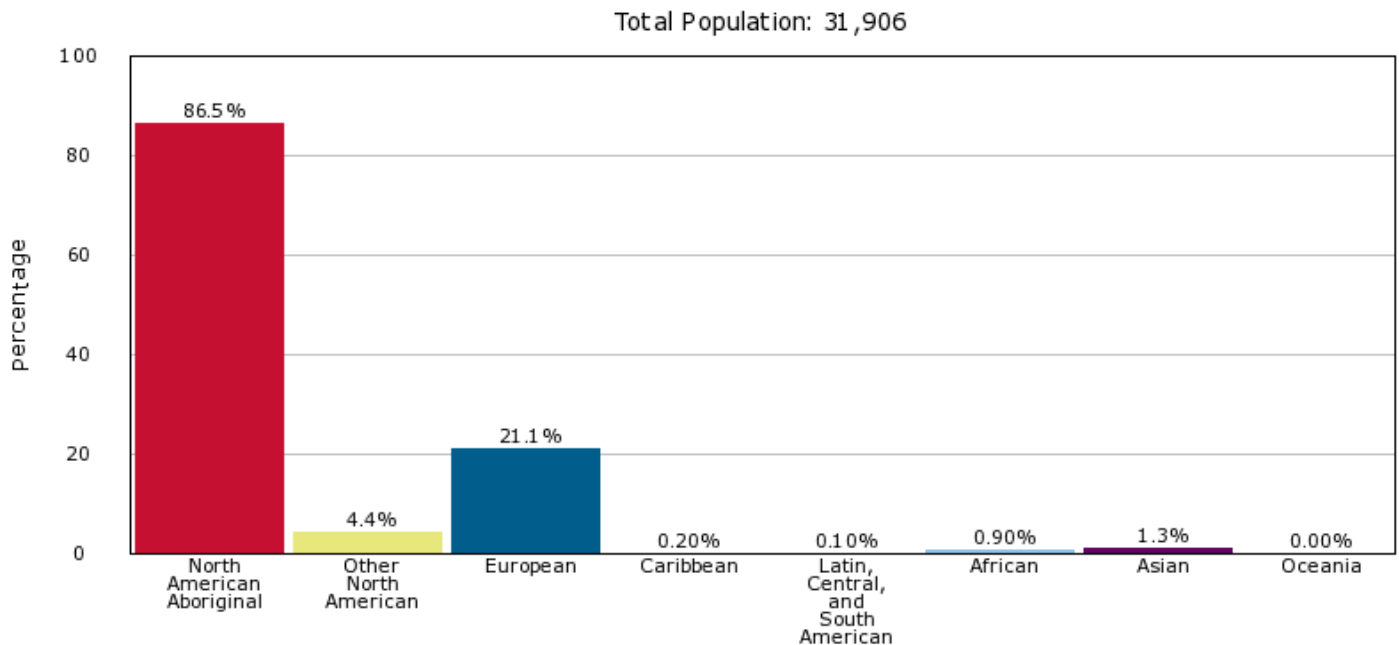
In 1982, they voted in favour of splitting the territory, and in 1992 an agreement was reached on the boundary between the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. In 1993, the federal government passed both the Nunavut Act, creating the new territory, and the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement Act, which gave ownership of large areas of the land to the Inuit people. The government began a transition period so the residents of the new territory could prepare themselves for the transfer of government from the Northwest Territories to Nunavut. On 1 April 1999, Nunavut was officially established.

The People

Population

The majority of Nunavummiut are Inuit. The rest of the population is made up of people whose origins are from southern Canada. The largest concentration of people is in the capital city, Iqaluit. Half of Nunavummiut live on Baffin Island. About a third live along the Hudson Bay, and the rest make their homes on the coast of the Arctic Ocean.

Inuit have a very high birth rate compared to the rest of Canada, meaning more babies are born per year as a percentage of the total population. As a result, the Inuit population in Nunavut is a very young population. When these young people grow up, they will form a large workforce and help the territory's economy grow.



Canadians may belong to more than one group. Totals may not equal 100%.

Government

Federal

Senators: 1

Conservative: 1

Members of Parliament: 1

Independent: 1



In Canada, members of Parliament are elected from across the country. The leader of the party that wins the most seats in the House of Commons becomes the prime minister. The prime minister is the head of government in Canada. The monarch (today, Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom) is leader in name only. She appoints a governor-general to be her representative in Canada. The role of this governor-general is largely ceremonial. In Canada, there are two separate lawmaking bodies, the House of Commons, which is made up of elected members, and the Senate, whose members are appointed by the governor-general under the advice of the prime minister. The House of Commons debates and votes on *bills* (proposed laws). The Senate carefully examines the *bills* and decides whether to approve, change, or reject them. For a *bill* to become law, it must be passed by both the House of Commons and the Senate and be given royal *assent* (approval) by the governor-general.

Territorial

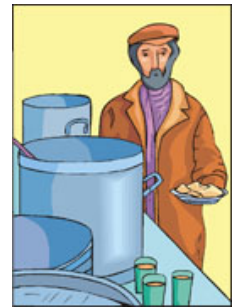
Capital: Iqaluit, population 6,699
Territory Abbreviation: NU
Premier: Peter Taptuna
Commissioner: Nellie Kusugak
Members of the Legislative Assembly: 22
Female MLAs: 2

The commissioner of Nunavut is appointed by the government of Canada and holds a position similar to lieutenant-governor in the provinces. The territory has an elected *legislative* (lawmaking) body, the Legislative Assembly, which represents voters and elects the premier and a Cabinet. Each Cabinet member is placed in charge of a department such as education, health, or environment. The Cabinet members advise the premier, while the Legislative Assembly makes the laws.

Key Issues

Family Assistance and Shelters

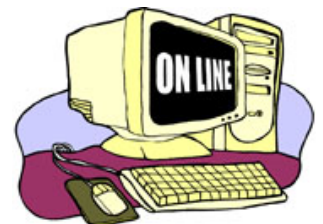
Nunavut has one of the nation's highest rates for abuse and violence, much of which is rooted in the loss of traditional culture. The government of Nunavut has passed laws to protect abuse victims and to help solve family problems with counselling. However, these programs are expensive. Some shelters have been forced to close their doors because of lack of money, and many people live so far away from the shelters that they cannot access them even when they are open. Sometimes shelters are able to stay open because independent organizations step in to help out and provide much needed resources. These shelters are important alternatives for abuse victims because of extreme housing shortages in the area.



Homeless shelters are also necessary but rare. Many people in need have nowhere else to go because of the shortage of homes in the territory. The federal government has offered some assistance to keep homeless shelters open and running in Nunavut. Nunavut's government continues to try to improve the system.

Communication

Reliable internet sources are becoming more widespread in Nunavut. Nunavummiut have been working on lowering costs and finding ways to provide better internet service in the territory. Wireless internet is now offered in most communities, along with broadband in the larger ones. The internet is an important communication link to people who live in isolated communities.



Most children have access to the internet in school, and young Inuit use chat and social networking services to stay in touch with their friends in other communities. Some communities have free computer access sites for people who do not have a computer at home. A unique problem for Inuit was finding how to get their Inuktitut *syllabics* (writing system) represented in computer systems, but Inuktitut is now supported on most operating systems.

First Nations, Métis, and Aboriginal Peoples

Nunavut is the only area in Canada where *indigenous* (native) peoples form the majority of the population. The word *Inuit* is Inuktitut for “the people.” There are also many people with part Inuit and part *Qallunaat* (European) heritage. Inuit form about half of the government workforce. There is very little job opportunity, though, and many people require financial support from the government. Many Inuit do seasonal work throughout the year, such as hunting, fishing, tourist outfitting, or construction work. Some also earn extra money or work full-time selling folk art such as carvings, drawings, prints, or traditional clothing.



The territorial government is working to match the educational system to the ever-changing needs of the children in the hopes that this generation will receive the education needed to get better-paying, higher-level jobs. To help students become more familiar with their native heritage, schools often invite Inuit elders into the classrooms to share their knowledge and talk about their people’s past. Students also get breaks from school to go on seasonal hunting or trapping trips with their families.

Inuit also love games and sports. Many traditional Inuit sports can be played with just one or two people and are often contests of physical strength. Inuit wrestling is different from the wrestling seen on television. The two wrestlers keep their feet flat on the ground and use only their arms and upper bodies to lift the opponent off the ground. The game *ajagak* involves holding a thin piece of seal bone tied by a strip of leather to a larger block of bone. The larger block has holes drilled into it and the goal is to toss the block into the air and try to spear the thin piece of bone through one of the holes. *Ajagak* is similar to playing ball in a cup but takes more skill. Sports such as volleyball, hockey, and indoor soccer are very important to communities. To attend tournaments, Nunavut children usually have to fly by plane to another community, and good athletes can become very well-travelled.

Famous People



Paul Okalik

- *Tanya Tagaq* – Inuit throat singer
- *Kenojuak Ashevak* – Inuit printmaker
- *Jordin Tootoo* – Professional hockey player and first Inuk professional athlete
- *Susan Aglukark* – Inuit singer
- *Zacharias Kunuk* – Inuit filmmaker
- *Nakasuk* – Founder of Iqaluit
- *John Amagoalik* – Father of Nunavut
- *Michael Kusugak* – Children’s author
- *Paul Okalik* – First premier of Nunavut
- *Sheila Watt-Cloutier* – Environmental activist
- *Lucie Idlout* – Musician
- *Peter Irniq* – Politician



Tanya Tagaq



**Zacharias
Kunuk**



Jordin Tootoo

Cultural Notes

Inuit Artists

Inuit traditionally carved small dolls and toys for their children. In the 1950s, people from southern Canada, like James Houston, encouraged the Inuit to make carvings for sale as artwork and taught them new art techniques such as printmaking. Inuit art is now a very big business, with older artwork selling for tens of thousands of dollars in art galleries in southern Canada. Some communities have specialized in certain types of art. The community of Kinngait (also called Cape Dorset) is famous for prints and carvings made out of soapstone, wood, and bone. Pangnirtung is well-known for its prints and tapestries, while Baker Lake (also called Qamani'tuaq) is a centre for embroidered duffle cloth wallhangings. In every community, people make carvings, drawings, and embroidered hangings and garments to sell to visitors.



Language Preservation

Nunavut has four official languages: Inuktitut, Inuinnaqtun, English, and French. Most Inuit speak some form of Inuktitut or Inuinnaqtun, which also have many local *dialects* (ways of speaking or pronouncing). Inuit people are very concerned with preserving their traditional languages, and many efforts are being made to keep them alive. One area of focus is publishing books, newspapers, and other printed materials in multiple languages. Currently, Nunavut's *Hansard* (government record) is published in English and Inuktitut, and the Department of Education runs an active program publishing schoolbooks in Inuktitut.

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Fun Facts & Contacts

Official Emblems

Territorial Flower

Purple Saxifrage

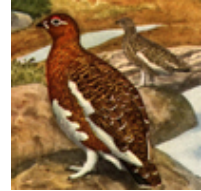
This purple flower is one of the first flowers of spring. It is a hardy little plant and blooms all over in different arctic climates.



Territorial Bird

Rock Ptarmigan

This bird is also known as the Snow Chicken. It lives on rocky mountainsides and has the ability to change the color of its feathers to blend in with its surroundings.



Territorial Animal

Canadian Inuit Dog

This powerful dog is also known as the *Qimmiq* (Inuktitut for “dog”). For many years, Inuit used these dogs to pull sleds and hunt seals, but now the breed is very rare.



Territorial Symbol

Inuksuk

This is a stone landmark that Inuit people used as a milestone or marker to help them navigate across the icy arctic landscape. It represents safety.



Territorial Coat of Arms

This unique coat of arms is the only one to be designed by Inuit elders, artists, and the entire population of the territory. The symbols were chosen from eight hundred submissions. The blue and gold colors symbolize the territory’s riches: the sea and the sky. The *inuksuk* (landmark) represents the stone markers that guide people across the land. The *qulliq*, or Inuit “stone lamp,” stands for light and warmth, as well as family and community. The five golden circles refer to the life-giving sun arching above and below the horizon, while the star is the *Niqirtsuituq*, or the “North Star,” also a traditional symbol of navigation. The *iglu* (snow house) is a symbol of survival and the traditional life of the people. The *tuktu* (caribou) and the *qilalugaq tugaalik* (narwhal) are common animals in Nunavut.



Major League Sports Teams

There are currently no Major League sports teams in Nunavut.

For More Information

To learn more about Nunavut, see www.gov.nu.ca. Or contact Nunavut Tourism, PO Box 1450, Iqaluit, NU X0A 0H0; phone (866) NUNAVUT; web site www.nunavuttourism.com.

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Nunavut

EXTREMES

Coldest: At Shepherd Bay, the temperature dipped down to -57.8°C (-72°F) on 13 February 1973.

Hottest: The hottest temperature was 33.9°C (93°F) in Arviat on 22 July 1973.

Highest: Barbeau Peak on Ellesmere Island is the territory's highest elevation, at 2,616 metres (8,583 ft).

Lowest: Sea level is the territory's lowest point, at Hudson Bay.

