



Nunavut: Where's that? Jack Searles

Ever hear of Nunavut? Well if the answer is no.....you will! You see it appears that a new Canadian province is about to be born and it is called Nunavut.



Source: http://www.nunavutparks.com/visitors_centre/index.cfm

Nunavut is a new territory being carved out of Canada's central and eastern arctic territory. The name itself means "our land". The vast majority of the population of Nunavut (85%) is Inuit, a Native American population indigenous to this area. The primary language spoken by the Inuit is Inuktitut.

Geographical orientation

So where precisely is Nunavut? Nunavut is being created out part of the Canadian Province of Northwest Territories. A map of Nunavut is shown above. This is a large Territory, covering some 353,610 square kilometers of land and spanning three (3) time zones. This area includes a number of settlements including: Resolute, Nanisivik, Arctic Bay, Pond Inlet, Clyde River, Broughton Island, Pangnirtung, Repulse Bay, Hall Breach, Igloolik, Pelly Bay, Taloyoak, Gjoa Haven, Cambridge Bay and Kugluktuk. Notably, Nunavut will contain both the magnetic North Pole and the geographic center of Canada, which is located at about thirty kilometers northeast of Baker Lake. Iqaluit will be the capital of Nunavut.

Generally, as a rule winter visitors should be prepared for cold temperatures and short days. On the shortest days of winter in Iqaluit, the sun rises and sets in four (4) hours! The further you go north in this new province, the shorter the winter days get.

In the summer high temperatures vary widely. The warmest day on record in Iqaluit is seventy-nine (79) degrees F (24.4 degrees C). In the summer months of July and August, the inland areas are generally warmer than the coastal areas and the western regions are warmer than the Baffin Region.

There are no roads that link most of the communities in this Province. The majority of travel between communities and areas of the province is done by plane. By far, snowmobiles and all terrain vehicles (ATVs) are the transportation mode of choice within communities. And yes....dog teams are still used in winter and boats of all types and sizes are used during those times of the year during open water season.

History of Nunavut

In 1993, the Inuit, the government of Canada and the government of

the Northwest Territories signed the largest aboriginal land claim agreement in Canadian history. This agreement was the direct result of the Nunavut Land Claim.

The Nunavut Land Claim was made after the formation in 1971, of the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, an organization with the responsibility to pursue and negotiate land claims for the Inuit of Canada. This included Inuit peoples living in Labrador, Quebec and the Northwest Territories. With such a broad scope, it quickly became apparent that regional negotiations would be more fruitful.

In 1971, when the province of Quebec decided to develop the James Bay hydroelectric project, aboriginal groups including the Inuit were able to stop the project until aboriginal land claims were settled. The James Bay and Northern Quebec Settlement ended this standoff but set an important precedent for all succeeding negotiations.

This event was followed by the Inuvialuit Settlement which was driven by oil exploration and a proposed oil pipeline down the Mackenzie Valley. This settlement was fashioned after the James Bay Settlement.

Without the pressure of either oil or hydroelectric development, the Nunavut Claim was then able to be pursued. Negotiations were sporadic at that time since 1974 for a comprehensive agreement. Thirteen years of intense and detailed negotiations followed. A final agreement was reached and signed in September, 1992. This agreement was ratified by 84.7% of the Inuit beneficiaries in a plebiscite two months later. This agreement was signed by the Prime Minister of Canada on May 25, 1993 in Iqaluit and passed through the Canadian under the terms of this agreement:

- Title to Inuit lands measuring 355,842 square kilometers is deeded to the Inuits, of which 35,257 square kilometers include mineral rights;
- Capital transfer payments of \$1.1 billion, payable over 14 years beginning in 1993;
- A share of Canadian federal government royalties from oil, gas and mineral development;
- The right to harvest wildlife on the lands and waters throughout the Nunavut settlement area; and
- The right of first refusal on sport and commercial projects.

The new territory will literally redraw the map of Canada and North America. Further, this agreement will make the Inuit the largest private land owners in North America. On April 1, 1999, Nunavut becomes the first territory to enter the federation of Canada since Newfoundland joined in 1949. Nunavut will be subject to the Canadian Constitution and Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It will be a public government with a population that is 85% Inuit; it is expected that this majority population will significantly impact upon the operation and process of the provincial Government.

Plans are underway for a massive celebration in Iqaluit on April 1, 1999. There will be fireworks, a late night ecumenical religious service, traditional games, dances and feasts. As was noted in the Nunatsiaq News, “there’ll be no sleep for us that night”.

At the stroke of midnight on April 1, 1999 fireworks will formally signal the division of the Northwest Territories. Soon thereafter, senior officials will gather to appoint Nunavut’s first commissioner. The residents of Nunavut will be able to see the full day’s activities on television via a special Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) coverage on their 24 hour news channel Newsworld. As of yet, this new province lacks a flag, however, be assured that in the interim time one will be developed and many ecstatic residents will proudly wave this flag at the ceremonies on April 1, 1999.

Economy

The creation of this new province will create many new pressures, problems and opportunities. Nunavut’s economy is currently driven by hunting and fishing on a subsistence level and to a lesser degree on a commercial level. Currently, the government accounts for half (1/2) the jobs in Nunavut.

Nunavut has some mineral deposits and several mines are already in operation. There is also the potential for offshore oil. It is strongly hoped that Nunavut can foster and enhance its infant tourism industry. Plans are in the works for the development of big game hunting, trophy fishing and photography tours. One Canadian firm has already opened a chain of hotels throughout the new province. The new province already has elaborate plans under way to market the potential that is this land of polar bears, dog sleds, northern lights and the midnight sun. Those interested in travel information

can call toll-free at 1-800-491-7910, or contact them on the internet at:
<http://www.nunatour.nt.ca> .



Philatelic interests

Currently, Canada is planning on commemorating the creation of Nunavut with a single stamp issued by the Canada Post. The stamp issue date has not been released yet, however, the stamp will feature a Nunavut landmark. Details on postal cancellations, last and first days covers of post offices have also not been released as yet.

This event has all the makings of an important philatelic event, consider joining in the celebration!

Sources cited:

Arctic Travel. What is Nunavut? Found at: <http://www.arctic-travel.com/press/whatis.html>

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Whynot, Irving C. Nunavut on 1999 stamp program: Canada's newest territory will be featured on a 1999 issue. Canadian Stamp News, November 10, 1998, page 8.

