

Symbols of Nunavut

Nunavut Flag

The flag of Nunavut was officially adopted on April 1, 1999.

The colors blue and gold symbolize the riches of the land, sea and sky. Red is a reference to Canada. The Inuksuk symbolizes stone monuments which guide people on the land, and also marks sacred and other special places.



The star is the Niqirtsuituq (North Star), and the traditional guide for navigation. The North Star is also symbolic of the leadership of the elders in the community.

The Flag of Nunavut was designed by Andrew Karpik from Pangnirtung.



Coat of Arms

The dominant colors of blue and gold symbolize the riches of the land, sea and sky.

In the base of the shield, the Inuksuk symbolizes the stone monuments which guide the people on the land and mark sacred and other special places. The qulliq, or Inuit stone lamp, represents light and the warm of family and the community.

Above, the concave arc of the five gold circles refers to the life-giving properties of the sun arching above and below the horizon, the unique part of the Nunavut year. The star is the Niqirtsuituq, the North Star and the traditional guide for navigation and more broadly, forever remains unchanged as the leadership of the elders in the community.

In the crest, the igluit (igloo) represents the traditional life of the people and the means of survival. It also symbolizes the assembled members of the Legislature meeting together for the good of Nunavut; with the Royal Crown symbolizing public government for all people of Nunavut and equivalent status of Nunavut with other territories and provinces in Canadian Confederation.

The tuktuk (caribou) and qilalugaq tugaalik (narwhal) refer to the land and sea animals which are part of the rich natural heritage of Nunavut and provide sustenance for people.

The compartment at the base is composed of land and sea and features three important species of Arctic wild flowers.

The motto in Inuktitut – Nunavut Sanginivut means Nunavut, our strength.

The Coat of Arms was designed by Andrew Karpik from Pangnirtung.

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The Mace of Nunavut

The Mace of the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut was first unveiled to the public on March 30, 1999.

It was carried by the Sergeant-at-Arms to open the first sitting of the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut on April 1, 1999. at the beginning of each day's sitting of the Legislative Assembly, the Sergeant-at-Arms carries the Mace over his or her right shoulder, leading a procession of Pages, Clerks and the Speaker into the Chamber.



In the Chamber of the Legislative Assembly, the Mace rests in the hands of a man and woman carved in granite and labradorite. This represents the equal respect for both genders of the population. Following British Parliamentary traditions, there are upper and lower positions for the Mace. The upper is used when the Speaker of the House is presiding and the lower is for when the House takes a recess during the sitting day or convenes as the Committee of the Whole.

In the 12th century, the mace was a weapon to protect English and French Kings. The Sergeant-at-Arms was held responsible for protecting the king and used the mace as a weapon. Now, the mace symbolizes the authority of the Legislative Assembly.

The mace is made out of Narwhal tusk. The animals on the mace represent the connection between land, sea and a food source. The common loons carved from Nanisivik silver form a crown with a cross on top. The cross symbolizes the respect for the British Monarch. The carved people carrying the mace represent a family working together. The elder helps lead the way to the future. The man and woman represent gender equality. The big ball is blue lapis lazuli in the world. The gemstones around the crown were hand-cut by the artists. The clear stones are quartz, the purple stone is amethyst, the red is garnet, black quartz, green citrine, blue lapis, white marble. At the tip of the mace is a 2 ¼ carat diamond from the Jericho Diamond deposit in Western Nunavut.

All the materials on the mace come from Nunavut, as do the artists. The mace has traveled outside Iqaluit once to Rankin Inlet.

The artists are:

- Inuk Charlie – Cambridge Bay
- Paul Malliki – Repulse Bay
- The late Simata Pitsiulak – Kimmirut
- Mathew Nunqingaq – Iqaluit
- Mariano Aupilardjuk – Rankin Inlet
- Joseph Suqslaq – Gjoa Haven

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The Official Animal of Nunavut

The Canadian Inuit Dog

Nunavut has selected the Canadian Inuit Dog (*Canis familiaris borealis*) to be the official animal of the new territory. Called Qimmiq in Inuktitut, this dog is one of the world's oldest pure breeds and, from archaeological evidence, is known to have been resident in the Arctic for at least 4000 years. This dog has been essential to the survival of the Inuit for generation, being the only draft animal for long-range travel and a willing and capable hunting companion.



The Canadian Inuit Dog is perfectly suited, through long adaptation, to survive in the hostile Arctic environment. They are thick-coated, robust animals of medium size (30-28kg.), with curly tails, upright ears and an overall appearance of strength and stamina. The breed is non-color specific with all known dog colors and shades being possible. The breed is free of genetic defects, thrives on a diet of protein and fat and is first and foremost a superb working animal.



The Official Flower of Nunavut

Purple Saxifrage

A welcome sight to northerners, the Purple Saxifrage (*Saxifrage oppositifolia*) is one of the first plants to flower in the Arctic spring. This plant most often grows in very rocky ground where no other plants seem able to grow. Small, with trailing leafy stems, the branches end in single flowers, which are often so crowded together that there appear to be many more than one on a stem. Called Aupilaktunnguat (“something like bold spots”) in Inuktitut, the petals of the purple saxifrage are usually a vibrant purple color, although a single white flower can occasionally be seen. Where many of the plants grow together

across the tundra, they provide a vivid purple contrast to the snow that is often still present when they flower.

The purple saxifrage plays a number of roles in Northern culture. The full blooming of the flowers indicated the time of year when young caribou are being born out on the land. The flowers of the purple saxifrage have a sweet taste and are eaten especially in communities where berries are not abundant. When eaten, the flowers can help relieve gastric problems, but, as with all herbal remedies, if eaten in excess can cause complications. The stems and leaves can be used to make tea. According to many Nunavummiut, the tea is best later in the season after the flowers have died. In times when tobacco was a valued commodity, the stems and leaves were often added to store bought tobacco. As one of Nunavut’s hardiest and most reliable plants, it is fitting that the purple saxifrage has been chosen as its Floral Emblem.



The Official Bird of Nunavut

The Rock Ptarmigan

While most other birds migrate south in the early fall, the Rock Ptarmigan (*Lagopus Mutus*) is truly an arctic bird, living in Nunavut throughout the year. Called Aqiggiq in Inuktitut, the rock ptarmigan is found throughout the circumpolar world, earning a place in the art, folklore and diet of indigenous peoples.

Distinct from most other birds with its three variations of plumage instead of the usual two, the rock ptarmigan faces its biggest challenge to survival in the winter, when snow and wind conditions make a good and shelter hard to find.

Camouflaged by its white winter plumage, the rock ptarmigan uses its long black claws to scratch through the snow to reach buried vegetation such as the low-lying purple saxifrage. Other characteristic features of the bird mirror human adaptations to the harsh Arctic surroundings. A black stripe from the corner of the bill and across the eyes has been compared to a pair of Inuit snow goggles, a unique invention to prevent snow blindness in the glare of the Arctic spring. A rock ptarmigan’s feet are feathered right down to the toes, keeping it warm, and acting as a pair of feathery snowshoes to prevent the bird from sinking into the snow. And, in the deep of winter, the ptarmigan will use snow as a shelter, burrowing deep to escape the bitter wind and indigenous predators such as the fox and marten. Adaptations such as these have earned the rock ptarmigan its place as an Arctic symbol and as the official bird of Nunavut.