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Reference Guide

Aboriginal Peoples Reference Guide



National Household Survey, 2011



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Standard symbols

The following symbols are used in Statistics Canada publications:

- not available for any reference period
- .. not available for a specific reference period
- ... not applicable
- 0 true zero or a value rounded to zero
- 0^s value rounded to 0 (zero) where there is a meaningful distinction between true zero and the value that was rounded
- p preliminary
- r revised
- x suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the *Statistics Act*
- E use with caution
- F too unreliable to be published
- * significantly different from reference category (p < 0.05)

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Definitions and concepts

There are various ways to define the Aboriginal population using data from the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS), depending on the focus and the requirements of the data user. The following variables, which are used to define the Aboriginal population, are available from the survey and are defined in the *National Household Survey Dictionary*, Catalogue no. 99-000-X:

- [Aboriginal identity](#)
- [Aboriginal group](#)
- [Registered or Treaty Indian status](#)
- [Membership in a First Nation or Indian band](#)
- [Aboriginal ancestry](#)

The population estimates for Canada from the 2011 National Household Survey using the different definitions are shown below.

Table 1 Population estimates for Canada from the 2011 National Household Survey using the different definitions

Concept	2011 NHS estimate ¹
Aboriginal identity ²	1,400,690
Aboriginal group	1,374,215
Registered or treaty Indian status	697,510
Membership in a First Nation or Indian band	675,490
Aboriginal ancestry ³	1,836,035

1. Random rounding and percentage distributions: To ensure the confidentiality of responses collected for the 2011 National Household Survey while maintaining the quality of the results, a random rounding process is used to alter the values reported in individual cells. As a result, when these data are summed or grouped, the total value may not match the sum of the individual values, since the total and subtotals are independently rounded. Similarly, percentage distributions, which are calculated on rounded data, may not necessarily add up to 100%.
Due to random rounding, estimates and percentages may vary slightly between different 2011 National Household Survey products, such as the analytical documents and various data tables.
2. 'Aboriginal identity' refers to whether the person reported being an Aboriginal person, that is, First Nations (North American Indian), Métis or Inuk (Inuit) and/or being a Registered or Treaty Indian (that is, registered under the *Indian Act* of Canada) and/or being a member of a First Nation or Indian band.
3. 'Aboriginal ancestry' includes at least one response in Question 17 to an origin that can be classified in one of First Nations (North American Indian), Métis or Inuit ancestry, either with or without also reporting a non-aboriginal ancestry.

Specific legally-defined geographic regions are often important to users of Aboriginal data. The following variables, as defined in the *National Household Survey Dictionary*, Catalogue no. 99-000-X are available from the survey:

- [Area of residence - On reserve](#)
- [Area of residence - Inuit Nunangat](#)

The data collected in the NHS are used by governments, including Aboriginal governments and organizations, to develop programs and services for Aboriginal people.

Classifications

Data collected from answers reported in Aboriginal questions in the National Household Survey (NHS) are used to derive summary and detailed variables which provide a portrait of Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

The 2011 NHS standard classifications for Aboriginal identity, Aboriginal group, Registered or Treaty Indian status, Membership in a First Nations or Indian band, Aboriginal ancestry, Area of residence - On reserve and Area of residence - Inuit Nunangat are shown in [Appendix A](#). Tables accessible from the '[Data and other products](#)' section of this document also show the specific Aboriginal variables used in data products for the 2011 NHS.

The detailed language classification used to disseminate data for the Knowledge of non-official languages, including Aboriginal languages, can be found in [Appendix 1.4](#) of the *National Household Survey Dictionary*, Catalogue no. 99-000-X.

Questions

The 2011 National Household Survey (NHS) data on Aboriginal identity, Aboriginal group, Registered or Treaty Indian status, Membership in a First Nation or Indian band and Aboriginal ancestry variables were collected from answers reported in questions 18, 20, 21 and 17:

- Aboriginal identity: Derived data from Questions 18, 20 and 21
- Aboriginal group: Question 18
- Registered or Treaty Indian status: Question 20
- Membership in a First Nation or Indian band: Question 21
- Aboriginal ancestry: Question 17 (ethnic origin)

Most 2011 National Household Survey respondents received the [2011 National Household Survey Form N1 questionnaire](#), while respondents living on Indian reserves, in Indian settlements, in Inuit regions and in other remote areas received the [2011 National Household Survey Form N2 questionnaire](#). On both questionnaires, questions 18, 20 and 21 were identical.

In Question 17 (Ethnic origin), the examples were different on the N1 and N2 questionnaires. The N1 examples were: Canadian, English, French, Chinese, East Indian, Italian, German, Scottish, Irish, Cree, Mi'kmaq, Salish, Métis, Inuit, Filipino, Dutch, Ukrainian, Polish, Portuguese, Greek, Korean, Vietnamese, Jamaican, Jewish, Lebanese, Salvadorian, Somali and Colombian.

In comparison, the N2 questionnaire examples were more specific to the Aboriginal population: Cree, Ojibway, Mi'kmaq, Salish, Dene, Blackfoot, Inuit, Métis, Canadian, French, English and German.

For the most part, the N1 questionnaire examples were based on the most frequent single origins reported in the 2006 Census and were arranged in descending order of size as reported in 2006, beginning with the largest group. Examples were also included to reflect Aboriginal peoples living in Canada. Similarly, on the N2 questionnaire, the most frequently-reported Aboriginal origins were included as examples, with an effort being made to ensure that Aboriginal examples from different regions of Canada were included. Non-Aboriginal examples in the list included the most frequently-reported origins in the 2006 Census.

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More information on the wording and format of the 2011 NHS questions used to define the Aboriginal population and the instructions which were provided to respondents in order to assist them in answering those questions can be found in the [N1 questionnaire](#), the [N2 questionnaire](#), the [National Household Survey Use Guide](#), Catalogue no. 99-001-X as well as the 2011 *National Household Survey Dictionary*, Catalogue no. 99-000-X entries for [Aboriginal Group](#), [Registered or Treaty Indian status](#), [Membership in a First Nation or Indian band](#) and [Ethnic origin](#).

Data and other products

Data for the 2011 National Household Survey Aboriginal variables were released on May 8, 2013 as part of an integrated release with ethno-cultural variables.

The products published using 2011 NHS Aboriginal data include:

- [Data products](#)
 - NHS Profile
 - NHS Data Tables
- [Analytical products](#)
- [Reference products](#)

For more information on and access to 2011 NHS data, please refer to the [2011 National Household Survey \(NHS\)](#) website.

Data quality

The National Household Survey (NHS) underwent a thorough data quality assessment similar to what was done for the 2011 Census of Population and past censuses. It consisted of an assessment of various data quality indicators (such as response rate), and an evaluation of the overall results, in comparison with other data sources such as comparisons to Census of Population data.

Survey process

Quality indicators were calculated and assessed at each of the key steps of the survey. During the collection and processing of the data, the quality and consistency of the responses provided were assessed as were the non-response rates. The quality of the imputed responses was assessed after the completion of the control and imputation steps.

Certification of final estimates

Once data processing and imputation were completed, the data were weighted to represent the total Canadian population. These weighted data (the final estimates) were then certified, at the national, provincial and territorial levels of geography, to determine if they were coherent and reliable in comparison to other independent data sources. This is the final stage of data validation. The main highlights of this assessment are presented below.

Non-response bias

Non-response bias is a potential source of error for all surveys including the NHS. The risk of non-response bias increases as the response rate declines. This issue arises when the characteristics of those who choose to participate in a survey are different than those who refuse. Statistics Canada adapted its collection and estimation procedures in order to mitigate, to the extent possible, the effect of non-response bias. (For more details, please refer to the [National Household Survey User Guide](#), Catalogue no. 99-001-X).

Several data sources were used to evaluate the NHS estimates for Aboriginal variables such as: 2011 Census results for mother tongue (since a relationship exists between language and Aboriginal identity, Registered or Treaty Indian status and Membership in a First Nation or Indian band); the 2001 and 2006 censuses; [Population Projections by Aboriginal Identity in Canada](#); and administrative data pertaining to Registered Indians from Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC).

It is impossible to definitively determine how much the NHS may be affected by non-response bias. However, based on information from other data sources, evidence of non-response bias does exist for certain populations and for certain geographic areas.

On the basis of the estimates and trends from the sources mentioned above, evidence suggests that the Inuit population living outside of Inuit Nunangat is overestimated at the national level. The magnitude of this overestimation appears to be higher (and more variable) for some smaller geographic areas. Additionally, while the NHS results show increases in the growth of the Métis population and the First Nations population living off reserve as compared with data from the 2006 Census, many factors, other than non-response bias, could explain the growth of these populations, including changes in reporting patterns and the propensity of people to self-identify as an Aboriginal person.

Generally, the risk of error increases for lower levels of geography and for smaller populations. At the same time, the data sources used to evaluate these results are also less reliable at these lower levels making it difficult to certify these smaller counts.

For more information on NHS non-response bias and mitigation strategies, please refer to the [National Household Survey User Guide](#), Catalogue no. 99-001-X.

Data quality indicators

Of all the quality indicators used for the evaluation, two are presented: the global non-response rate and the imputation rate by question.

- The global non-response rate combines the non-response at the household level and the non-response at the question level. It is provided by geographic level. The global non-response rate is the key criterion that determines whether or not the NHS results will be released for a given geographic area. Information on the global non-response rate is available in the [National Household Survey User Guide](#), Catalogue no. 99-001-X.
- The imputation rate is the proportion of respondents who did not answer a given question or whose response is deemed invalid and for which a value was imputed. Imputation can improve data quality by reducing the gaps caused by non-response.

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The imputation rates for the NHS Aboriginal variables are similar to those of the 2006 Census (see Table 2). The imputation rates, at the national level, for the 2011 National Household Survey are: Aboriginal Group (3.7%), Registered or Treaty Indian Status (4.7%), First Nation/Indian Band Membership (3.8%). For the 2006 Census, the imputation rates for these variables were 2.9%, 3.1% and 2.9% respectively.

Table 2 Imputation rates for Aboriginal variables, 2011 National Household Survey, Canada, provinces and territories

	Aboriginal group (Question 18)	Registered or Treaty Indian status (Question 20)	Membership in a First Nation or Indian Band (Question 21)
Provinces	percentage		
Canada	3.7	4.7	3.8
Newfoundland and Labrador	4.4	6.0	4.2
Prince Edward Island	3.9	6.1	3.9
Nova Scotia	3.7	5.1	3.4
New Brunswick	3.4	4.4	3.2
Quebec	3.6	4.3	3.4
Ontario	4.1	5.1	4.2
Manitoba	3.3	4.3	3.5
Saskatchewan	3.0	4.3	3.5
Alberta	3.4	4.6	3.9
British Columbia	3.5	4.6	3.9
Yukon	3.6	4.9	5.1
Northwest Territories	1.1	1.0	3.4
Nunavut	1.4	1.1	3.4

Incompletely enumerated Indian reserves and Indian settlements

In 2011, there were a total of 36 Indian reserves and Indian settlements that were 'incompletely enumerated' in the NHS. For 23 reserves or settlements, NHS enumeration was either not permitted or was interrupted before it could be completed. In the case of 13 reserves in Northern Ontario, enumeration was delayed because of natural events (specifically forest fires) and estimates for these communities are not included in national or provincial estimates.

The extent of the impact will depend on the geographic area under study. It is much less for higher geographic areas such as Canada, provinces and territories, census metropolitan areas, and census agglomerations. The impact may be more significant for lower geographic areas, such as census subdivisions.

The issue of incompletely enumerated reserves has the most impact on NHS estimates for the First Nations population living on reserve as well as the Registered or Treaty Indian population living on reserve. Estimates for other populations will also be affected.¹

1. Other affected populations include: Total Aboriginal identity population, First Nations (North American Indian) identity population, total Aboriginal ancestry population, First Nations (North American Indian) ancestry population, Registered or Treaty Indian population, population who reported membership in a First Nation or Indian Band, population living on Indian reserves and Indian settlements.

Estimates associated with other variables related to First Nations, such as language and band housing, may also be affected by the incomplete enumeration of certain Indian reserves and Indian settlements in the NHS. This issue does not have an impact on the estimates for the Inuit or Métis populations, as they are much less likely to live on reserve.

Comparability of data on Aboriginal people over time

The following factors should be taken into account when comparing data on Aboriginal people over time, for example, when comparing between the 2006 Census and the 2011 National Household Survey:

- Differences in the wording and in the format of Aboriginal questions.

There are various ways to define the Aboriginal population based on the four questions asked in the NHS. These questions are Aboriginal ancestry (Question 17 on ethnic origin); Aboriginal group (Question 18); Registered or Treaty Indian status (Question 20); and member of a First Nations/Indian band (Question 21).

Although measuring the same concepts, the four NHS questions differ slightly from the Aboriginal questions on the 2006 Census. The question wording was modified to reflect current terminology and ensure ongoing accuracy when measuring the Aboriginal population.

To see how these questions have changed since 2006 please refer to the 2011 National Household Survey Forms [N1](#) and [N2](#) and the 2006 Census Form [2B](#) and [2D](#) questionnaires.

- Differences in methodology of the 2011 NHS.

For information on the methodology of the NHS please refer to the [National Household Survey User Guide](#), Catalogue no. 99-001-X. All efforts are made to reduce errors in estimation and the Census of Population plays a major role in ensuring the reliability in the estimates of the NHS.

- Legislative changes, for example Bill C-31 in 1985 and Bill C-3 in 2011, which affect concepts such as Aboriginal identity and Registered or Treaty Indian status.

Changes to Canada's laws as they pertain to Aboriginal people may affect how Canadians respond to the questions to identify Aboriginal peoples. The net effect of these changes cannot be measured. Users should be careful when interpreting the results.

- Changes made to the definition of reserves.

Statistics Canada uses the definition of 'on reserve' provided by Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC). From time to time there are changes made to the geographies that define Indian reserves and Indian settlements (see the [Census subdivision \(CSD\)](#) definition in the *2011 Census Dictionary*, Catalogue no. 98-301-X, for the definition of Indian reserve). In 2006, there were 1,174 'on reserve' census subdivision (CSD), while in 2011 there were 997. The changes are the result of additions, deletions, changes in geographic coding and amalgamations. Because these are geographic changes, adjustments for these are possible. Users need to request a special tabulation for data that has been adjusted for these changes in order to compare populations on the affected geographies (e.g., comparing on and off reserve population). For more information about reserves consult the [AANDC](#) home page (<http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100010002/1100100010021>).

- Differences in the list of incompletely enumerated reserves.

In 2011, there were a total of 36 Indian reserves and Indian settlements that were 'incompletely enumerated' in the NHS; 31 of these were also incompletely enumerated in the 2011 Census (see [Incompletely enumerated Indian reserves and Indian settlements](#)). The five additional reserves that were incompletely enumerated in the NHS were situations where only the census portion was completed and the NHS enumeration was either not permitted or was interrupted before it could be completed, or was not possible because of natural events. In 2006 there were 22 Indian reserves and Indian settlements that were 'incompletely enumerated' in the census. While the number of incompletely enumerated reserves has decreased over the last few censuses, there was an increase in 2011 because of natural events, especially due to forest fires for 13 reserves in Northern Ontario.²

To compare two different points in time, the exclusions in both reference points have to be applied to the each base estimate, which means only reserves present at both time points can be used in the comparison.

Over and above these factors, for a variety of reasons, some people report their Aboriginal identity and/or ancestry differently from one data collection period to another. A portion of the growth in the number of people reporting an Aboriginal Identity or Ancestry is due to natural (demographic) growth, as well as due to other factors. While the majority of those reporting an Aboriginal Identity or Ancestry has been stable over time, there can be changes in reporting patterns between Aboriginal groups and between the non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal populations. While some of the factors listed above could affect these response behaviours, there could still be other phenomena at work, such as the social climate, changing attitudes about Aboriginal identity, anticipated legal changes, or other factors that may influence how people view themselves. Users should be aware that, for the 2011 NHS, these reporting differences are more frequent among non-Status First Nations people, Inuit living outside Nunangat and Métis.

2. Collection of the survey for the 13 incompletely enumerated reserves affected by forest fires in Northern Ontario was done at a later time and processing for these communities could not be done at the same time as the National Household Survey. Their data will be released later.

Comparability with other data sources

The National Household Survey (NHS) is currently Statistics Canada's main source of data on Aboriginal peoples. Prior to 2011, this information was collected by the Census of Population.

In addition to the National Household Survey, Statistics Canada has other key data sources specific to the Aboriginal population, for example, the [Aboriginal Peoples Survey 2012 – Education and Employment](#), the [Aboriginal Peoples Survey](#) (1991, 2001 and 2006) and [Aboriginal Children's Survey](#) (2006).

Some of Statistics Canada's household surveys of the general population, for example the [Labour Force Survey](#), are able to produce estimates on the Aboriginal population.

Statistics Canada's reports [Population Projections by Aboriginal Identity in Canada](#), under specific scenarios, can also be used as estimates of Aboriginal peoples.

Many factors affect comparisons of Aboriginal data across these sources. Amongst other factors, comparability is affected by differences in survey target populations; reference period; sampling and collection methods; question wording, questionnaire format, examples and instructions; approaches to data processing; and the social and political climate at the time of data collection. For additional information, please refer to the [National Household Survey User Guide](#), Catalogue no. 99-001-X.

Appendix A

Aboriginal identity

Aboriginal identity is derived from data collected from answers reported in three questions: Aboriginal group (Question 18); Registered or Treaty Indian status (Question 20); and Membership in a First Nation or Indian band (Question 21).

The following is a standard 2011 NHS classification used for [Aboriginal identity](#) variable:

Total - Population by Aboriginal identity

Aboriginal identity¹

First Nations (North American Indian) single identity²

Métis single identity³

Inuk (Inuit) single identity⁴

Multiple Aboriginal identities⁵

Aboriginal identities not included elsewhere⁶

Non-Aboriginal identity

Notes:

1. 'Aboriginal identity' variable refers to whether the person reported being an Aboriginal person, that is, First Nations (North American Indian), Métis or Inuk (Inuit) and/or being a Registered or Treaty Indian (that is, registered under the *Indian Act* of Canada) and/or being a member of a First Nation or Indian band. Aboriginal peoples of Canada are defined in the *Constitution Act, 1982*, section 35 (2) as including the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada.
2. 'First Nations (North American Indian) single identity' includes persons who reported being First Nations (North American Indian). This category includes persons who reported the single response of First Nations (North American Indian) but did not report being Métis or Inuk (Inuit).
3. 'Métis single identity' includes persons who reported being Métis. This category includes persons who reported the single response of Métis but did not report being First Nations (North American Indian) or Inuk (Inuit).
4. 'Inuk (Inuit) single identity' includes persons who reported being Inuk (Inuit). This category includes persons who reported the single response of Inuk (Inuit) but did not report being First Nations (North American Indian) or Métis.
5. 'Multiple Aboriginal identities' includes persons who reported being any two or all three of the following: First Nations (North American Indian), Métis or Inuk (Inuit).
6. 'Aboriginal identities not included elsewhere' includes persons who did not report being First Nations (North American Indian), Métis or Inuk (Inuit) but who did report Registered or Treaty Indian status and/or membership in a First Nation or Indian band.

Aboriginal group

Aboriginal group variable is a direct variable; data are collected from answers reported in Question 18.

The following is a standard 2011 NHS classification used for [Aboriginal group](#) variable:

Total - Population by Aboriginal group

Aboriginal group single response¹

First Nations (North American Indian) single response²

Métis single response³

Inuk (Inuit) single response⁴

Aboriginal group multiple responses⁵

First Nations (North American Indian) and Métis multiple responses

First Nations (North American Indian) and Inuk (Inuit) multiple responses

Métis and Inuk (Inuit) multiple responses

First Nations (North American Indian) and Métis and Inuk (Inuit) multiple responses

Not an Aboriginal person⁶

Notes:

1. 'Aboriginal group single response' includes persons who reported being one and only one of First Nations (North American Indian), Métis or Inuk (Inuit) in Question 18.
2. 'First Nations (North American Indian) single response' includes persons who reported being First Nations (North American Indian) in Question 18 but did not report being Métis or Inuk (Inuit).
3. 'Métis single response' includes persons who reported being Métis in Question 18 but did not report being First Nations (North American Indian) or Inuk (Inuit).
4. 'Inuk (Inuit) single response' includes persons who reported being Inuit in Question 18 but did not report being First Nations (North American Indian) or Métis.
5. 'Aboriginal group multiple responses' includes persons who reported being any two or all three of the following in Question 18: First Nations (North American Indian), Métis or Inuk (Inuit).
6. 'Not an Aboriginal person' includes persons who did not report being an Aboriginal person, that is, First Nations (North American Indian), Métis or Inuk (Inuit) in Question 18.

Registered or Treaty Indian status

Registered or Treaty Indian status variable is a direct variable; data are collected from answers reported in Question 20.

The following is a standard 2011 NHS classification used for [Registered or Treaty Indian status](#) variable:

Total - Population by Registered or Treaty Indian status

Registered or Treaty Indian¹

Not a Registered or Treaty Indian

Note:

1. 'Registered or Treaty Indian' includes persons who reported being a Registered or Treaty Indian in Question 20. Registered Indians are persons who are registered under the *Indian Act* of Canada. Treaty Indians are persons who belong to a First Nation or Indian band that signed a treaty with the Crown. Registered or Treaty Indians are sometimes also called Status Indians.

Membership in a First Nation or Indian band

Membership in a First Nation or Indian band variable is a direct variable; data are collected from answers reported in Question 21.

The following is a standard 2011 NHS classification used for [Membership in a First Nation or Indian band](#) variable:

Total - Population by Membership in a First Nation or Indian band

Member of a First Nation or Indian band

Not a member of a First Nation or Indian band

Aboriginal ancestry

Aboriginal ancestry variable is a direct variable; data is collected from answers reported in Question 17, the Ethnic Origin question.

The following is a standard 2011 NHS classification used for [Aboriginal ancestry](#) variable:

Total - Population by Aboriginal ancestry

Aboriginal ancestry¹

First Nations (North American Indian) ancestry

Métis ancestry

Inuit ancestry

Non-Aboriginal ancestry²

Notes:

1. 'Aboriginal ancestry' refers to whether a person reported ancestry associated with the Aboriginal peoples of Canada in the ethnic origin question (Question 17). Aboriginal peoples of Canada are defined in the *Constitution Act, 1982*, section 35 (2) as including the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada. Ancestry refers to the ethnic or cultural origins of the respondent's ancestors, an ancestor being usually more distant than a grandparent. A person can have more than one ethnic or cultural origin. 'Aboriginal ancestry' includes persons who reported one or more than one of First Nations (North American Indian), Métis or Inuit ancestry in Question 17, either with or without also reporting a non-Aboriginal ancestry.
2. 'Non-Aboriginal ancestry' includes persons who did not report First Nations (North American Indian), Métis or Inuit ancestry in Question 17.

Area of residence - On reserve

Area of residence variable: On reserve is derived from geographic indicators in the National Household Survey (NHS).

The following is a standard 2011 NHS classification used for [Area of residence - On reserve](#) variable:

Total - Area of residence - On reserve

On reserve¹

Off reserve

Note:

1. 'On reserve' includes six types of census subdivision (CSD) legally affiliated with First Nations or Indian bands, i.e., Indian reserve (IRI), Indian settlement (S-É) (except for the five Yukon settlements of Champagne Landing 10, Klukshu, Two and One-Half Mile Village, Two Mile Village and Kloo Lake), Indian government district (IGD), *terres réservées aux Cris (TC)*, *terres réservées aux Naskapis (TK)* and Nisga'a land (NL), as well as the northern village of Sandy Bay in Saskatchewan.

Area of residence - Inuit Nunangat

Area of residence variable: Inuit Nunangat is derived from geographic indicators in the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS).

The following is a standard 2011 NHS classification used for [Area of residence - Inuit Nunangat](#) variable:

Total - Area of residence - Inuit Nunangat

Inuit Nunangat¹

Nunatsiavut

Nunavik

Nunavut

Inuvialuit region

Outside Inuit Nunangat

Note:

1. 'Inuit Nunangat' is the homeland of Inuit of Canada. It includes the communities located in the four Inuit Land Claim Agreement regions: Nunatsiavut (Northern coastal Labrador), Nunavik (Northern Quebec), the territory of Nunavut and the Inuvialuit region of the Northwest Territories. These regions collectively encompass the area traditionally occupied by Inuit in Canada.