

Seals & Nunavut ᓄᓕᓕ ᓄᓄᓐᓴᓂ:

our tradition, our future
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NUNAVUT INUIT



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Dan Heringa

Seals form a thread of continuity between the old and the new. Nearly all Inuit now live in small settled communities. Times have changed, and the traditional subsistence economy is adjusting to the challenges of the future. Seals and other forms of wildlife continue to hold great economic and cultural promise. They remain central to northern life even as Inuit in distant communities communicate by Internet and adopt other important aspects of contemporary life.

Seals abound in the Canadian Arctic. They will be hunted on a sustainable basis for generations to come, both for the excellent food they provide and also for skins that can be turned into elegant and functional garments for people far and wide.

The people of Nunavut, the new Inuit-majority territory in northeastern Canada that came officially into existence on April 1, 1999, make no apologies for their traditional way of life or cultural values. They seek their place in global trade and are happy to share their resources and achievements with all the peoples of the world as they work to build a bright future.

Cover: Mr. Tookilkee Kiguktak, age 67 from Grise Fjord, Ellesmere Island, 1996.

"There are more than ten ways to describe snow in Inuktitut. For example, natiruvaaq which is snow blown by the wind; mannguq which is melting snow; kinirtaq which is heavy and humid snow. We need snow for travel, to drink, to hunt and to build shelters. Snow is vital for us."

Cover photograph by Karim Rholem-Kimo

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A textured, blue-toned image of a vast, choppy sea under a hazy sky, with a distant shoreline visible at the top. The image has a grainy, halftone-like appearance.

A close-up photograph of two polar bears resting on a light blue, textured surface. The bear in the foreground is lying down, looking towards the right with its mouth slightly open, showing its teeth. The second bear is positioned behind it, also looking right with its mouth open. The bears have thick, white fur.



Michael C.

Winter day at noon, Frobisher Bay, Iqaluit.

roughly proportional to their share of the population, and the majority of administrative posts in the territorial government are held by Inuit.

Six years before Nunavut came into existence, the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement took effect. This gives the Inuit collective ownership of 350,000 square kilometres of land, including minerals beneath some portions of it, as well as a monetary settlement from the federal government (placed in a trust fund to support economic development and education), a share of resource royalties, guarantees of hunting rights, and key roles in land management and environmental protection. In exchange, the Inuit relinquished rights to future claims.

Government is the biggest employer in Nunavut, but the economy is becoming steadily more diversified. Mining, tourism, fishing and creative arts are important sources of income, and new opportunities are being explored.

There are no roads in Nunavut, except for local roads in the communities and a short highway connecting the village of Arctic Bay with the mining settlement at Nanisivik. Traditional dog teams that were used for winter travel have largely given way to snowmobiles, although dog teams are still found in most communities. Coastal shipping is possible only during the summer. Air travel is essential at all times of year for links between communities and the outside world.

The eastern islands of Nunavut are quite mountainous. The highest peak is Mount Barbeau, in the northern part of Ellesmere Island, which reaches an altitude of 2,616 metres. In the centre the topography is characterized by plateaux, with

lowland plains further west. Because of the cold climate, the subsurface stays frozen all year, and soil development is poor or nonexistent. The tree line lies roughly along the southern boundary of Nunavut. North of the tree line, it is too cold for forests to grow. Lower-lying areas are covered with tundra, varying from low bush to grass, with tiny trees in some sheltered areas. In parts of the central Arctic, ice sheets have stripped the land down to bedrock. At higher elevations and more northerly latitudes, the land is almost entirely barren.

Ice covers the sea much of the year, sparkling in the spring with a special light. People who venture out feel they can almost touch the sky. The ice never disappears from the northern extremes, although rising temperatures in recent years have led to a shrinkage of the permanent ice cover. The southeastern sector is not quite as cold because of its proximity to the Atlantic Ocean. Nunavut is among the driest areas in Canada, with only limited rainfall and snowfall. Snow tends to accumulate, maintained by low temperatures and packed hard by the wind. Winter temperatures in some places can go to minus 50 degrees Celsius or lower. Even summer temperatures tend not to average very much above freezing in most communities because of cold sea waters nearby.

Conditions may sometimes appear harsh to outsiders but have resulted in a special kind of beauty and solitude that lifts the spirits and rekindles the souls of those who go out on the land. The people of Nunavut are proud of the remarkable ingenuity shown by their ancestors in adapting to these conditions. This capacity for adaptation will help them meet the many challenges that lie ahead.

NUNAVUT

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Can you say Inuktitut?

The Inuit & their language

The most widely spoken language in Nunavut is Inuktitut, which is the language of the Inuit. About 70% of Nunavut residents regard Inuktitut as their mother tongue. Because of wide geographic separation over periods of many generations, various dialects have developed in different places. These dialects share common linguistic roots but in many cases are not readily understandable by speakers of other dialects. In Nunavut alone, there are seven dialects. Different dialects are spoken in Greenland, Alaska and other places where Inuit live, such as northern Québec and Labrador, the western Arctic shore, and the Chukotka area of northeastern Siberia.

Inuktitut has two writing systems. The more widely used system in Nunavut was developed by missionaries in the 19th century, based on a form of shorthand with each letter representing a full syllable. Thus, it is called syllabics. Roman orthography is used in Inuktitut writing in many places outside Nunavut and also by a minority in the west of Nunavut. The word Inuktitut means "in the manner of the Inuit." Inuit is a plural term meaning "the people." The singular form is Inuk. Nunavut means "our land."







Flora and fauna
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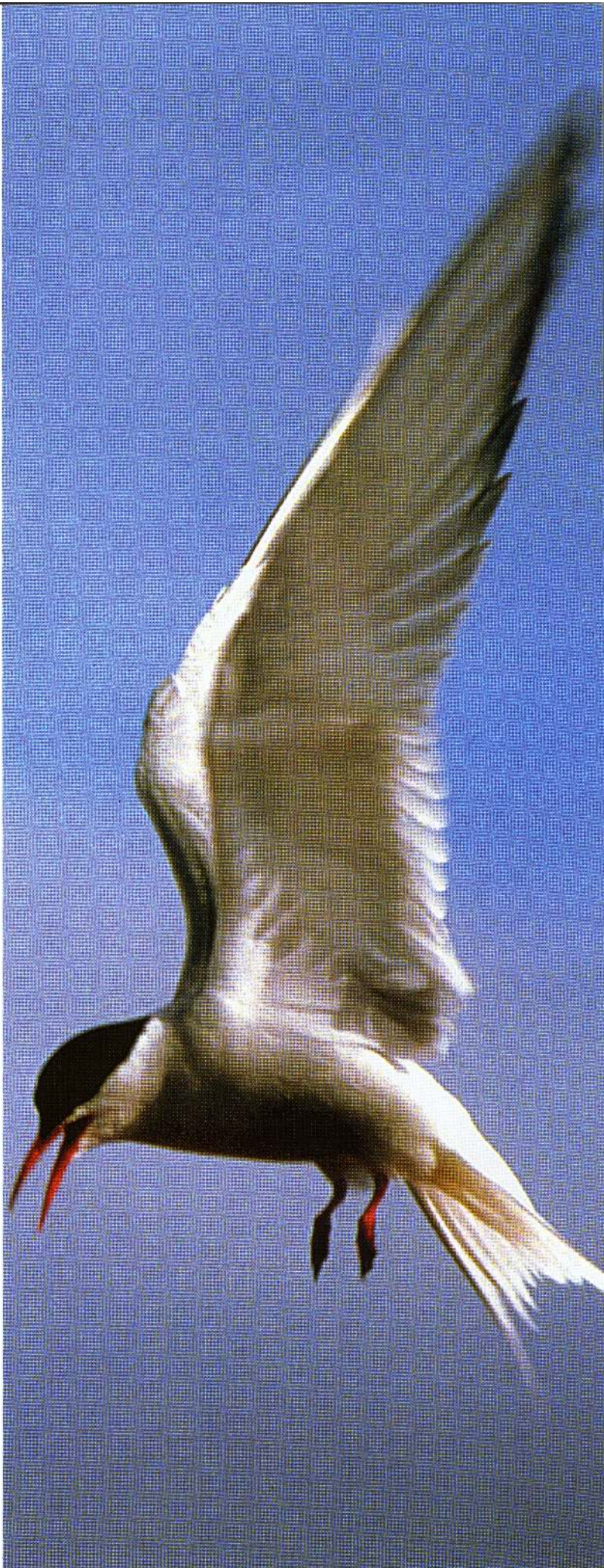
Most of Nunavut was covered by heavy sheets of ice until quite recently in its geological history. The retreating ice scraped the land down almost to bedrock, and very cold average temperatures in most places have resulted in the ground being frozen year-round starting only a few centimetres below the surface. Thus, there is little real soil and not much vegetation. Low scrub is found in some places, and tiny, stunted trees may be found in a few sheltered spots. Nonetheless, large areas of tundra burst into bright colour in the late spring and early summer with the appearance of small flowering plants.

Animal species are far more notable than plants in Nunavut. Among land mammals are the caribou, a deer-like animal that provides meat and hides to the people of the north and that is noted for its spectacular seasonal mass migrations; the musk-ox, a large animal with horns (males and females alike) and a prominent shoulder hump; and the polar bear, the largest of all bears, weighing up to 600 kilograms, with a white coat and a diet consisting mostly of seal. Other land mammals found in Nunavut include the wolf, the red fox, the Arctic fox, the wolverine, the Arctic hare, and the Arctic ground squirrel.

Marine mammals include the blue whale, found in small groups in Arctic waters in the summer, measuring up to 30 metres in length and sometimes weighing more than 100 tonnes; bowhead, sperm and beluga whales; the narwhal, a protected species hunted under a quota system, noted for its long spiral tusks (which can be sold only with a tag showing legal provenance), and valued traditionally by the Inuit for oil and hides; the killer whale, actually a member of the dolphin family; the ringed, harp, bearded, harbour and hooded seals (of which we will learn more in the following pages); and the walrus, a cousin of the seals, noted for its very large tusks that can be used to haul itself up the sides of ice floes.

Many bird species are found in Nunavut. Among them are several species of loons, the tundra swan, the snow goose, the Canada goose, the harlequin duck, the pintail duck, the oldsquaw duck, the common and king eider, the red-breasted merganser, the peregrine falcon, the gyrfalcon (said to be the largest and most magnificent of all falcons), the golden eagle, the rough-legged hawk, the snowy owl, the short-eared owl, the ptarmigan, the sandhill crane, various species of sandpipers, plovers and gulls, the jaeger, the northern fulmar, the Arctic tern (which migrates all the way to the Antarctic), alcids (the northern equivalent of penguins), the raven, the horned lark, the Lapland longspur, the water pipit, redpolls, the northern wheatear, and the snow bunting.

Among the better known species of fish in Arctic waters are the Arctic char (some living only in freshwater, others moving to freshwater in the winter and saltwater in the summer), the lake trout, the Arctic grayling, whitefishes, sticklebacks, sculpins, the Greenland shark, and several species of lumpfishes and cod, notably the Arctic cod and the turbot. Shrimp, clams and scallops are also found in Arctic waters. Some fishermen extend their lines more than 600 metres below the ice to catch turbot, much in demand in export markets, along with char and shrimp.



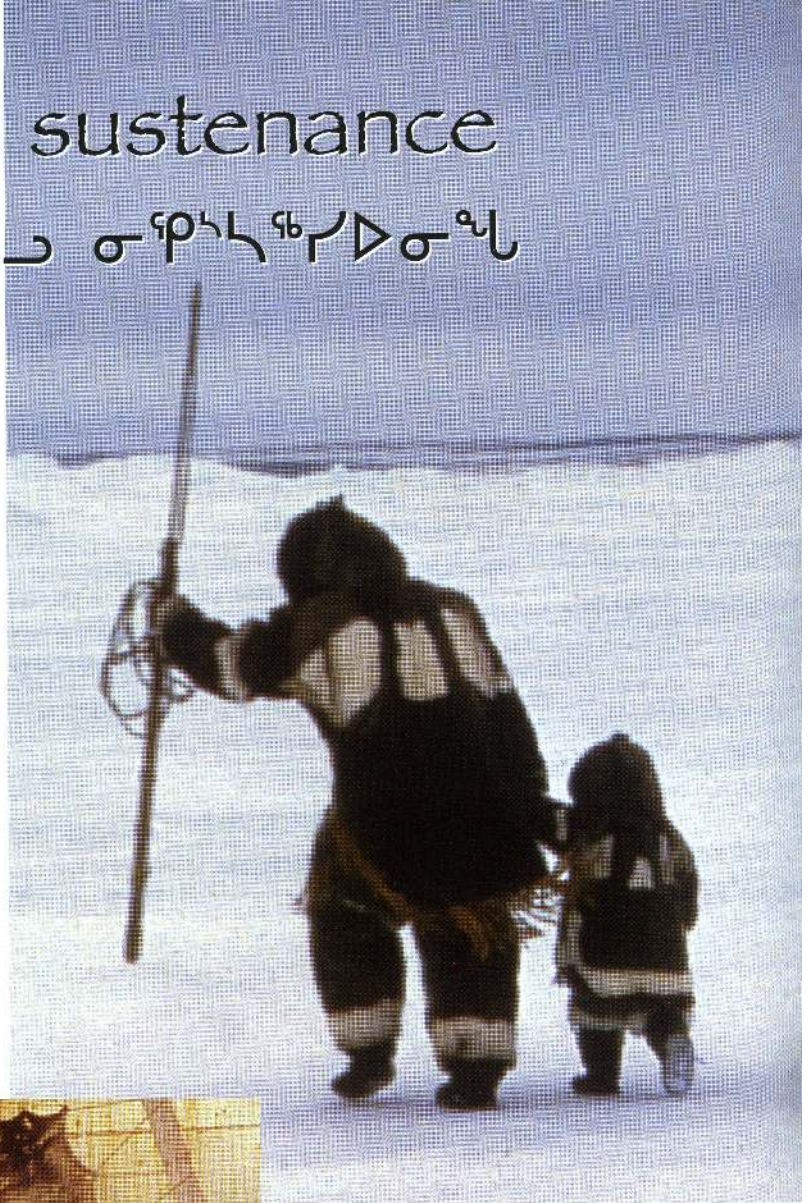
The well travelled Arctic Tern.

Spirit, soul and sustenance

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The Inuit have prevailed over the centuries because of their extraordinary ability to draw sustenance from the vast lands and frozen seas over which they have roamed in a difficult struggle for survival. They share these lands and seas with many other creatures. The frigid climate and the absence of arable soils render the land incapable of yielding grains or fruits suitable for human consumption. To meet basic needs for food and warmth, Inuit have traditionally been compelled to turn almost exclusively to animals — whether fish, fowl or mammals. This reliance has helped engender a deep integration with nature. The Inuit hold a profound relationship with fellow beings of the Arctic and an abiding respect for them. This is a source of marvel to those just learning about Inuit customs.

In the Inuit way of seeing the world, each living thing has a soul and a spirit that endure even after life has left the body. The Inuit hunter is grateful for the food, clothing and other necessities these creatures provide. He (nearly all hunters are male) seeks to protect their spirits so that



Traditions pass through the generations.



Sealskins are stretched to dry.

others will come and the hunt can be renewed. Special rituals are observed to show respect for the soul of a fallen animal. In one important ritual, the hunter places fresh water, obtained from melted snow, in the mouth of a slain seal to help slake its thirst. Other rituals are observed with different animals. Always the concern is to show kindness to the soul of the animal whose body is about to be put to use by humans. Inuit seal hunters use a rifle shot to the head or the thrust of a harpoon, causing instant death and sparing the animal from agony.

Inuit use the term *qujimajatuqangit* to denote their traditional knowledge of wildlife. Hunters are well aware of the dangers arising from reckless killing of animals. This can bring future retaliation in the form of famine. They know they must live in harmony with nature and take no more than is

needed. Only in this way can hunters and their families feel confident that the natural foods and skins they have relied upon in the past, and continue to appreciate today, will be available for generations to come. This age-old respect for environmental balance helps assure that seals and other forms of wildlife do indeed form a renewable resource.

Another sign of respect for the principles of conservationism is the way seals and other wildlife taken by Inuit hunters are put fully to use. Very little goes to waste.

Seals, in particular the ringed seals that abound in the open waters and beneath the winter ice cover of Canada's eastern and central Arctic, form a vital part of the traditional Inuit diet. Seal meat is flavourful and very high in nutritional value. It is rich in high-quality protein and polyunsaturated fats, as well as many vitamins and minerals. It is low in unhealthy saturated fats but high in a type of acid that breaks down fats. It contains omega 3, a type of fat thought to aid resistance to heart disease, as well as retinol, which is good for visual acuity and helps defend against upper respiratory infection. The fat in seal meat stimulates the release of prostaglandin, which improves blood circulation. Those Inuit who have come to depend heavily on store-bought food are more prone to a variety of ailments, starting with obesity, tooth decay, acne and anemia. In earlier times, seal meat was almost as common a part of the daily diet as bread was in Europe, so much so that some Christian

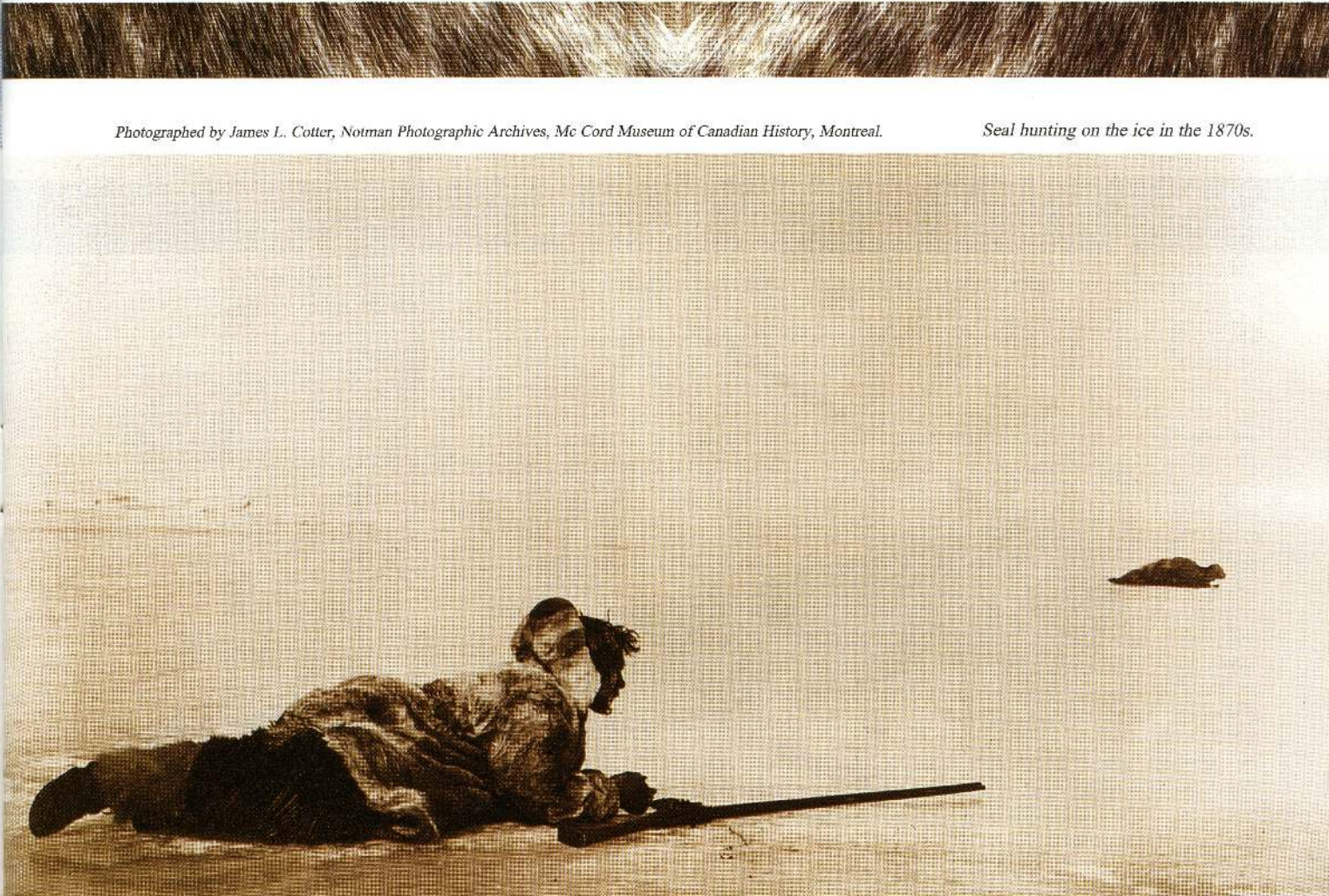
missionaries modified one verse of a popular prayer and called upon the deity to "Give us this day our daily seal."

In recent generations, the Inuit way of life has undergone a vast transformation, with semi-nomadic groupings replaced by permanent settlements, heated bungalows, and food shipped in from southern Canada. Grocery stores offer a bigger variety of foods than the Arctic itself can provide, but this offers only a partial substitute for the "country" foods that most Inuit continue to enjoy. Store-bought meats and other products tend to be inferior in flavour and nutritional value, and often are very expensive. Seals, along with most other wild meats, are not sold commercially; rather, they pass through informal family and community channels. Some hunters continue to ply their trade on a full-time basis. Others have entered the wage economy and hunt only on a part-time basis. In either case, their arrival back from hunting trips is eagerly awaited in their communities.

Even if food is the prime reason for hunting, seals and other animals come with wonderful skins that are turned into boots and garments or shipped to buyers in Canada and abroad who appreciate their many qualities. Seals also come with a heavy insulating layer of blubber that is put to multiple uses. In the old days, the blubber was burned to provide heat and light. Seal-oil capsules may become a source of export income in the future. The seal's intestines provide a resilient material that is excellent for waterproof coverings. Scarcely anything is thrown away.

Photographed by James L. Cotter, Notman Photographic Archives, Mc Cord Museum of Canadian History, Montreal.

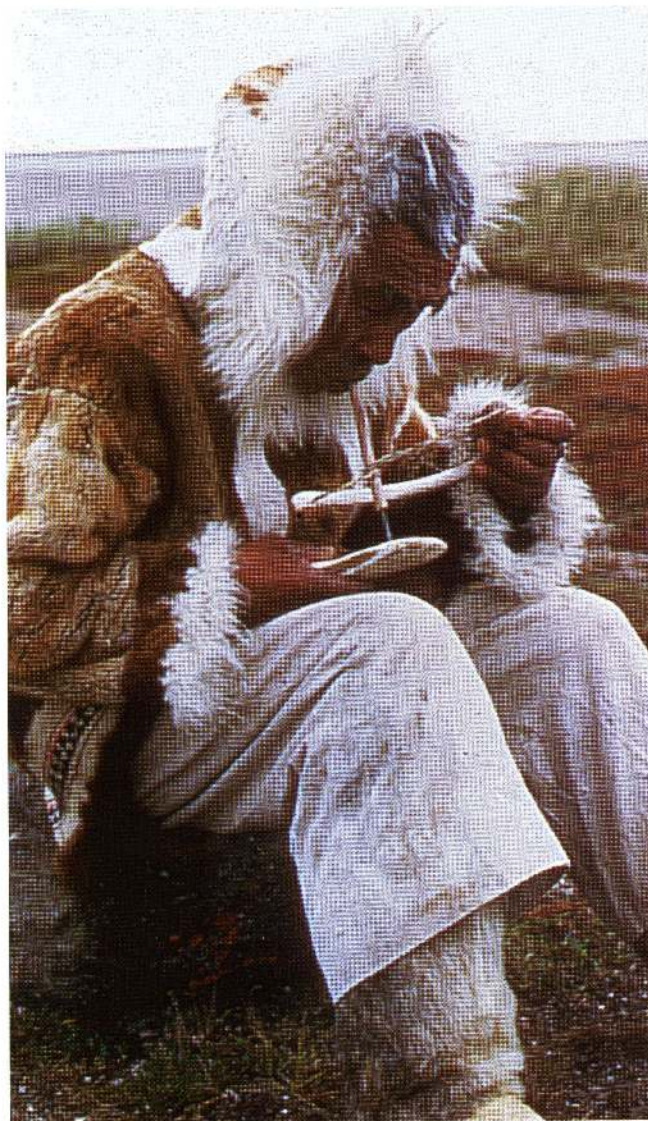
Seal hunting on the ice in the 1870s.



Life &
livelihood
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Seals have been part of the Canadian Arctic for millions of years, living mostly in the sea and on the ice. They are superbly well adapted to their cold, wet environment. Their flippers and their fat, sleek bodies enable them to move through the water with little resistance, although they are less well suited to movement on land. Seals are mammals, not fish, which means they need air to breathe. They maintain an internal body temperature similar to that of humans. They have large quantities of blood in relation to their body weight, and their blood has a high carrying capacity for oxygen. This enables them to dive beneath the surface of the sea for prolonged periods in search of food. A thick layer of blubber beneath the skin provides effective insulation against frigid water temperatures that would cause humans to die of hypothermia within several minutes. The surface of their bodies has a temperature just above the freezing point of water, showing how little heat escapes from inside. Their eyes and hearing systems work well in a marine environment. Their strong lungs and flexible bone structures can withstand the pressures found many metres below the surface of the ocean.

Five main species of seals are found in Nunavut coastal waters. None is more important than the ringed seal. All belong to the family known as “true seals”. Ringed and bearded seals are present year-round. Harp seals and hooded seals migrate into the area, mostly along the east Baffin coast, and may be found



Bow drill

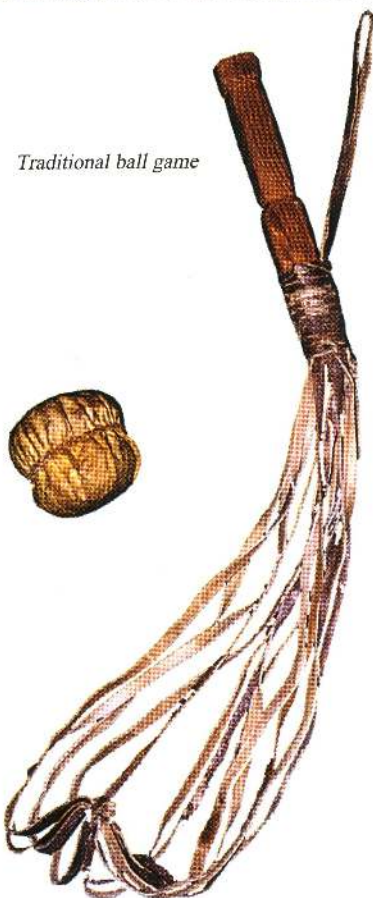


Snow knife in pouch



Hunting by kayak

Traditional ball game



from late spring to early fall. The fifth species, the harbour seal, is found in various spots on an irregular basis. The walrus, a related animal, is also found in Nunavut.

The ringed seal, the smallest of the five main species, is especially prized for the quality of its meat. It accounts for the vast majority of seals harvested in Nunavut. It takes its name from the circular markings on the back of the adult. The Inuit have many names for it, depending on age, sex or condition. These names include "nqetsiak" (white-coat), "nqetsiavinerk" (silver jar), "nqetsilak" (adult), and "tiggaq" (breeding male).

Ringed seals abound in the Canadian Arctic and off the coasts of Greenland, Siberia and Alaska. The average adult is 135 centimetres long and weighs about 70 kilograms (mature harp seals weigh nearly twice as much). The pupping season is concentrated in a brief period from mid-March to early April. The pregnant female finds a natural snow cave or excavates a lair in a snowdrift over a breathing hole on stable ice. Her natural milk is exceedingly rich in fat and solid matter. The pups gain weight very quickly and are weaned after only two weeks.

The ringed seal is a solitary animal that moves great distances on its own rather than in agglomerations or herds, unlike the more gregarious harp seal that has been so widely portrayed. It is not common to see more than one or two ringed seals together, and they are often hidden under the ice or the water. Wildlife biologists say this makes it difficult to estimate their numbers, but aerial strip censusing and pup surveys tend to show that numbers run into the millions and have tended to be stable. The current rate of harvest could be increased many times over without the survival of the species being threatened in any way. The biggest alarm signal would be hunters saying that seals are becoming scarcer. Other indications would be reproduction at an earlier age or a greater number of twins. None of these phenomena has been observed in recent years. At present, the biggest potential threat to seals comes not from hunters but from global warming, which could affect ice conditions and make breeding more precarious.



A hunter and his dog.

Lypa Pitseolak

Seals of all species are carnivorous. In other words, they eat other animals. They have sharp teeth and strong jaws. With their high rate of metabolism, they require plenty of food. The ringed seal's diet consists largely of Arctic cod (a species of little interest to humans) and amphipods, which are small, shrimp-like crustaceans that abound in the northern seas. Seals, in turn, are eaten by other animals. Their most important predator is the polar bear. Wildlife biologists say polar bears capture several times more seals than people do in the Arctic. Other natural predators of the seal include the walrus and killer whale.

Although Mother Nature has achieved a supreme level of harmony, it must be recognized that many of her creatures undergo early, violent deaths. This may sound unpleasant, but it is an unchanging part of reality. That is why nearly all species are endowed with the capacity to reproduce in numbers that can overcome their natural rate of elimination. If the birth rates of a given species run too high above death rates and their numbers increase sharply, there will be greater competition for food, and the result can be disease and starvation. Numbers come back down until a balance is achieved. Humans are the only species known to have escaped this rule, mainly in the last three centuries. In so doing we have created huge environmental pressures, which is all the more reason to show special care in the way we as humans treat nature.

The anti-sealing movement

Disagreements have erupted in places far removed from Nunavut over the best way to assure a healthy existence for seals. Years ago, groups claiming to act in the interests of wildlife preservation and animal welfare captured headlines in parts of Canada, the United States and western Europe. These groups have clamoured for an end to the commercial sale of seal

pelts and sealskin products. The fund-raising drives of anti-sealing groups proved so lucrative that they persisted long after their factual basis was shown to be weak. Lacking evidence to indicate that any species of northern seal was endangered, they attempted, instead, to stir public outrage by pointing to hunting methods used in the harvest of harp seal pups in places far away from the Arctic. They played on emotion by portraying seal pups as cute and innocent. Their clever manipulation led to a ban on sealskin imports in the United States and a selective ban in the European Union. Normally, only products derived from *endangered* species are covered by bans of this sort, but seals were seized upon as a symbol.

The U.S. Marine Mammals Protection Act of 1972 and a resolution by the European Parliament in 1983, swayed by highly paid anti-sealing activists in a triumph of emotion over fact, caused a collapse in the worldwide demand for seal pelts. The European ban did not specifically cover seals captured in the Arctic, but the ensuing publicity had the effect of destroying what had been by far the biggest market for sealskins. The cruel effects on proud Arctic communities, devastated by the disappearance of a major part of their traditional livelihood, included higher dependency on government assistance and a sudden jump in suicide rates. The animal rights movement was seen "as more than just another agent of cultural imperialism," a study on suicide rates stated in 1996. "The anti-sealing lobby was viewed as a direct assault on Inuit culture, identity, values and spirituality."

Part of the problem lies in the beauty of sealskins, which is what makes them attractive to potential buyers. Because the skins are so appealing to the eye and to the touch, the animals wearing them in their natural state also look very appealing, especially

young seal pups that have not bulked up to adult size and whose coats have not yet darkened. This makes it easy to build an emotional campaign; it would be much harder with animals of less alluring physical characteristics. The value system this reflects is far removed from true environmental concerns. Indeed, several important conservation groups have explicitly dissociated themselves from the anti-sealing movement.

Those who support singling out sealskin for discriminatory bans must consider the impact on communities where seals have long been a central facet of economic and cultural existence. Hunters in Nunavut take seals primarily for their meat, although skins and other parts of the animal are also put to good use. Seals will continue to be hunted for their meat, which forms a central part of the Inuit diet. It happens that the animal comes with a beautiful skin, and it would be a shame to waste it. Hunters depend on income from skins to cover costs such as fuel for their snowmobiles and ammunition for their rifles. Depressed prices for sealskins make it more difficult for hunters to make ends meet. If they cannot hunt seal, they and their families must depend more on store-bought foods, which are usually far inferior in nutritional value. This loss of livelihood also means a loss of purpose and self-worth. Anti-sealing campaigners portray wild animals as innocent victims of human cruelty. Their own actions are scarcely lacking in cruel consequences.

A commission of inquiry appointed by the Canadian government in the wake of the anti-sealing protests concluded that the killing of wild animals can be justified on ethical grounds if four conditions are met: the existence of the species is not threatened, no unnecessary pain or cruelty is inflicted, the killing serves an important use, and the killing involves a minimum of waste. The Nunavut seal hunt easily meets all these qualifications.

"Even with good marketing," the commission noted, "it will be some time before conditions relating to Inuit sealskin products are restored to the level of those occurring before the market collapse. In the intervening period, considerable economic and social distress is likely to continue in many communities."

Wildlife Management in Nunavut

The hunting of seals and other wildlife in Nunavut is carefully monitored by the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board. All catches are recorded, and numbers are tallied for each community. The management board was established under the terms of the Nunavut land claims agreement between the Inuit of Nunavut and the Government of Canada. Its main guiding principle is to fulfill the need for an effective system of wildlife management that takes account of traditional Inuit harvesting rights and involves Inuit in all aspects of management while contributing to the conservation of wildlife and the protection of wildlife habitat, using both traditional knowledge and modern science. Responsibilities include the awarding of quotas in the commercial fishery and the enforcement of regulations covering the hunting of various animals, including seals.

Fred Bruemmer

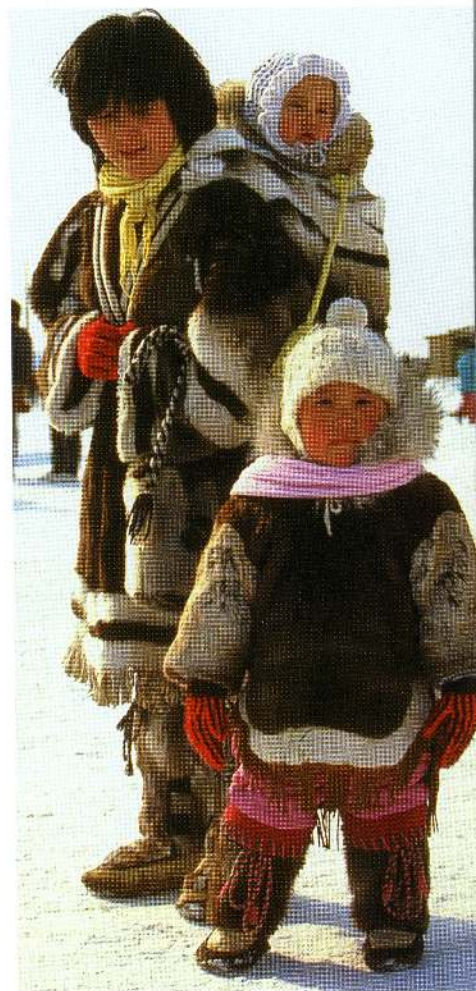


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Traditional styles in the modern world.



Animal skins continue to form an irreplaceable part of the Inuit wardrobe. Caribou is favoured for the heaviest and warmest winter coats, while sealskin is excellent for lighter spring coats and unequalled for kamiiks, as Nunavut's traditional boots are known. Contemporary Inuit also use factory-made fabric items from the

south, but nothing matches traditional clothing for warmth.

Elements of style vary across the Arctic, and older people can sometimes pinpoint where a visitor comes from just by looking at the decorative touches on traditional clothing.

Some common principles hold true, however, regardless of where in the Inuit world the articles are made. The most important quality is heat conservation. Clothing and footwear must keep the wearers warm even under extremely cold conditions. They also must "breathe" to eliminate humidity and yet hold fast against wind and moisture. Another important quality is durability. No woven or artificial fabric, and no method of clothing or footwear construction, has yet equalled traditional Inuit articles in achieving these characteristics. In the coldest weather it is common to wear two layers of animal skin for extra warmth. Inuit garments are designed to be worn loosely enough for warm air to circulate inside but without openings to let cold air in.

Before sealskin garments can be sewn, the hide of the animal has to go through a series of treatments. It must be cleaned in fresh water as soon as possible to wash away blood, salt and fat. It is later laid on a board where fat and blubber are scraped away. After more washing and scraping, the skin is stretched around a frame and left in an airy place to dry. Then it is painstakingly chewed or stamped upon to remove stiffness. In some cases skins are sent south for professional dressing. This improves their appearance, but some Inuit say there may be a small compromise in warmth.



Child's seal skin amouti.

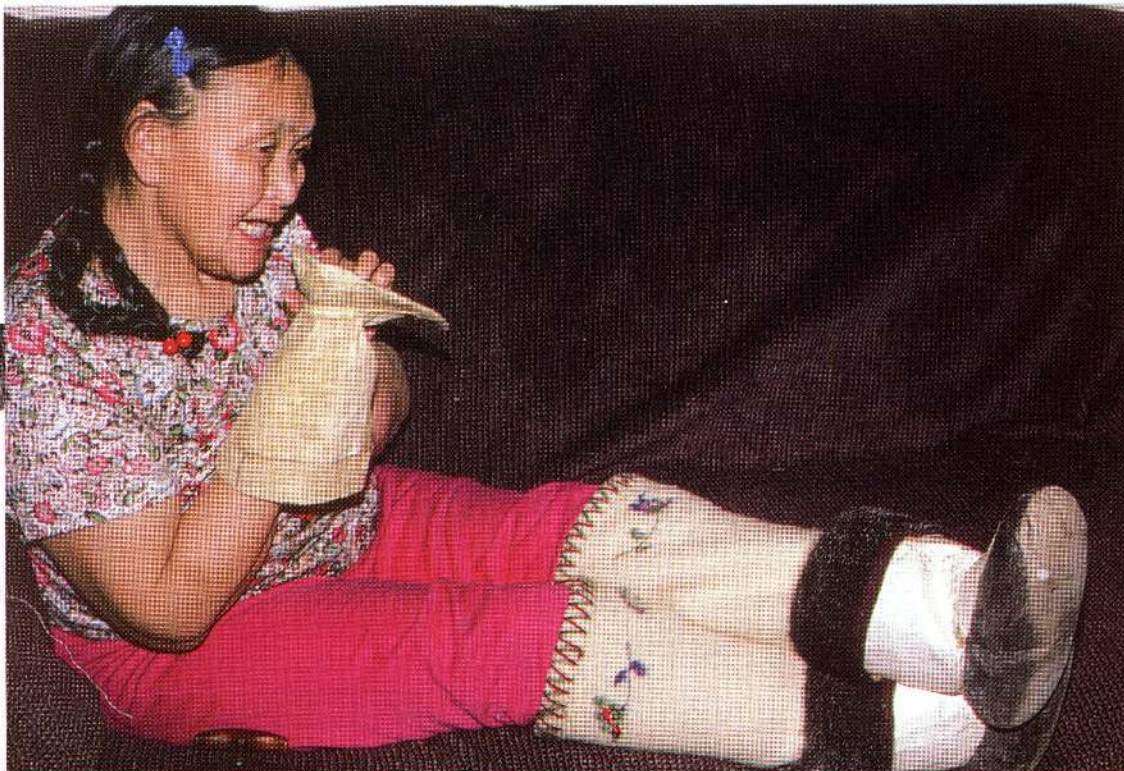


Donna Barnett

Braiding sinew.

The production of garments and footwear has traditionally been the work of Inuit woman, who have passed down their finely honed skills through the generations. This has evolved into something much more than just a task of assembling useful objects. Besides being an economic activity, it is also an important social activity, giving the women of each community an opportunity to work together, meeting with one another and talking as they work.

Seal skin purse and ulu.



David Poisey

Pangnirtung woman making kamiiks.

KEY DATES IN NUNAVUT HISTORY

Photographed by Robert J. Flaherty, *Nanook* Photographic Archives, Mc Cord Museum of Canadian History, Montreal.



Nyla (Nanook's wife in the film) & child, 1920-21

Nunavut history has two overlapping currents, one involving the Inuit, the other European explorers and traders. Only in the 19th century do these two currents begin to intertwine.

B.C. 2000: The earliest ancestors of present-day Inuit migrate from Siberia across the ice bridge over the Bering Strait after the ice cover from the latest Ice Age recedes from most of the Canadian Arctic; they begin a long process of adaptation, forming what was later called the Dorset culture; other migrations follow.

A.D. 800-1000: One of these groups, referred to as the Thule culture, absorb or displace the Dorset people; present-day Inuit are direct descendants of the Thule.

1000-1347: Norsemen make repeated voyages to the eastern shores of the Canadian Arctic.

1577: Explorer Martin Frobisher claims Baffin Island for England.

1607-11: English explorer Henry Hudson makes several unsuccessful attempts to find the Northwest Passage to the Pacific Ocean; he is abandoned by a mutinous crew in the bay bearing his name.

1616: An expedition led by William Baffin reaches Northumberland Island, near 78 degrees North latitude; no other European ventures this far north for another 236 years.

1670: King Charles II grants a charter to the Hudson's Bay Company, giving it a trading monopoly over all of northern Canada.

1819-57: Expeditions led by Sir John Franklin explore the Arctic coast over a distance of more than 3,000 kilometres but fail in attempts to sail through the Northwest Passage.

1850-53: Two expeditions, one sailing from the Atlantic and the other from the Pacific, meet at

midpoint and prove the existence of the Northwest Passage.

1870: Sovereignty over continental portions of the Arctic is transferred from Britain to the Dominion of Canada, created only three years earlier.

1875: Sir George Nares reaches Cape Columbia at the tip of Ellesmere Island, the most northerly land in the western hemisphere.

1880: Sovereignty over the Arctic islands is transferred to Canada.

1903-06: Roald Amundsen navigates the Northwest Passage in his ship, the *Gjøa*.

1905: The Northwest Territories are reduced in size with the creation of the provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta south of the 60th parallel.

1912: Northward extensions of the Quebec, Ontario and Manitoba boundaries reduce the area of the Northwest Territories still further.

1921: Administration of the Northwest Territories passes from the Northwest Mounted Police to the Department of the Interior in Ottawa.

1963: Early moves are taken to divide the Northwest Territories into east and west, although a federal commission of inquiry would later recommend a delay.

1966: The eastern Arctic gets its first elected members in the territorial legislative assembly; previous members had been appointed.

1972: The Anik-2 satellite brings television to the eastern Arctic.

1973: The modern land claims process is launched in the Arctic following a ruling by the Supreme Court of Canada recognizing aboriginal title; the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, an organization formed two years earlier, begins detailed study of Inuit land use and occupancy.

1975: An agreement in principle is voted down by Inuit, who regard it as too technical and legalistic; a political development document is approved four years later.

1979: Home rule is established in Greenland, resulting in a significant transfer of authority from Denmark; developments there are watched closely in the Canadian Arctic.

1982: Northwest Territories government puts the question of dividing the territory to residents in a plebiscite; 56% say yes; land claim negotiations continue.

1984: The first Inuktitut computer fonts are developed.

1992: The various parties, including government and Inuit land claims negotiators, agree on where the dividing line should go; the line is approved in a plebiscite; the creation of Nunavut as a separate territory is set in motion.

1993: The Inuit land claims agreement comes into effect; the federal Parliament formally enacts the agreement to create Nunavut.

1999: Elections to first Nunavut legislative assembly are held on Feb. 15; the territory comes officially into existence on April 1; Paul Ogalik, the first Inuk lawyer in Nunavut, is chosen premier by the legislative assembly at its inaugural sitting.

Art in Nunavut

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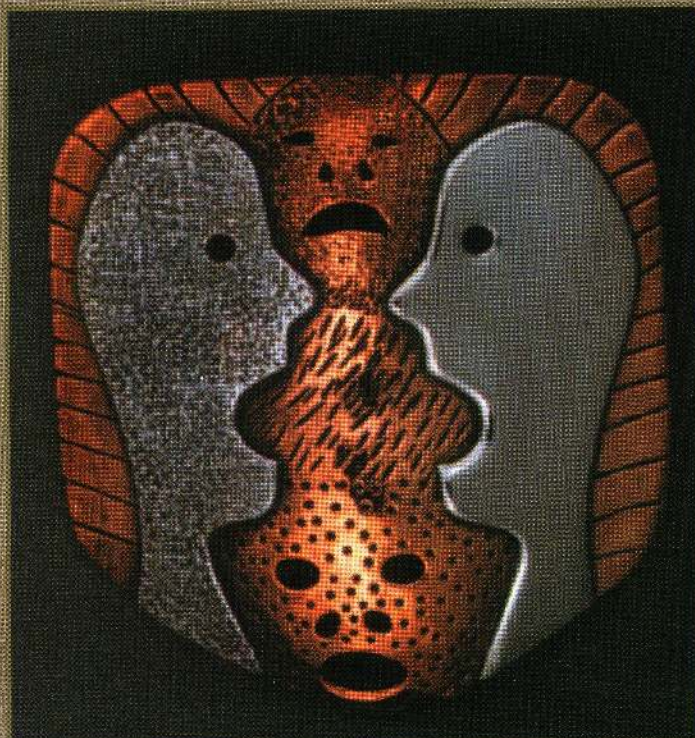
Courtesy: Heritage Collection



The artistic traditions of Nunavut go back more than 1,000 years, when people of the Dorset culture carved ivory amulets to serve spiritual needs. The Inuit and their ancestors have relied upon animal products such as bones, antlers and tusks to make many of the implements of daily life. These same materials, as well as certain types of stone, formed the basis of artistic sculpture as well. Some of these objects were traded with European and American whalers more than a century ago. Interest has been growing ever since.

Wildlife provides much of the inspiration for Inuit artists in Nunavut, and the range of production is remarkable for so small a population. Local artists work in a variety of media. The age-old sculptural tradition led quite naturally to stonecut prints and later to tapestries and metalwork. Probably the best known form of Inuit artistry is the rounded animal-shaped sculptures of varied sizes that are carved in several types of soft stone, which have come to be known by the generic term soapstone. The stone varies by locality in colour and texture. Some sculptors work with local marble, while others use traditional animal products such as muskox horn, caribou antler and ancient whalebone. Works by some of the better known artists command high prices.

Photography: Beth M. Hughes. Courtesy: Nunavut Arctic College, Phil Aris and Carby Program



Ancient Voices, silver and copper brooch by Pootungook Qviasuk



Peter Alasiak, Arviat "Holding it up" stone sculpture with silver bowl



Joe Aulajut, Arviat "Seals" silver Necklace

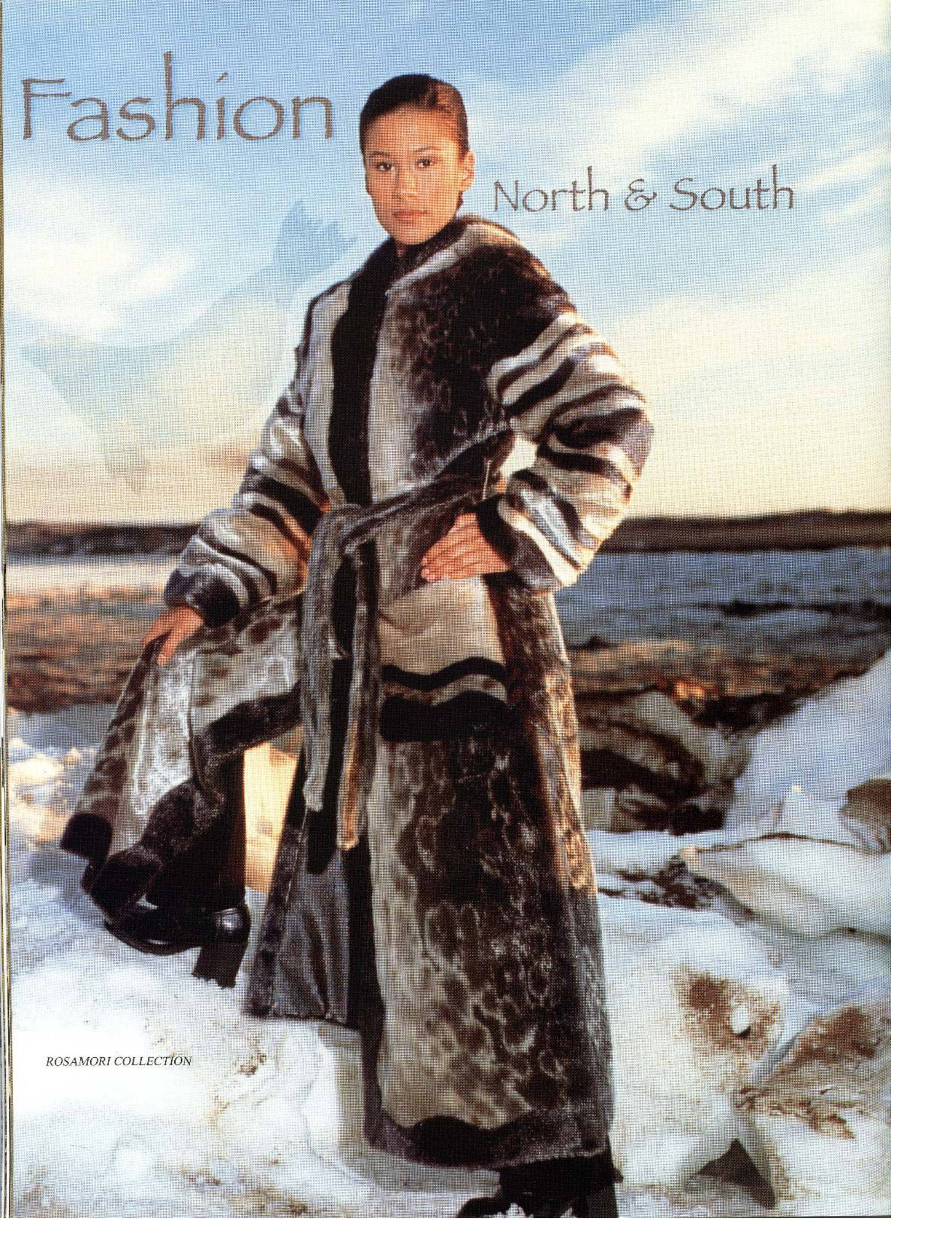


Stonecut prints and engravings produced at studios in several parts of Nunavut adorn art galleries around the world. Some have evolved to present images of nature or traditional scenes from Inuit life in abstract form, while many have achieved an increasingly sophisticated use of colour. New art forms based on ancient visions continue to emerge. Pottery, copper or silver jewelry, and several forms of embroidery reflect the haunting images found in older forms of artistic expression. Another interesting product from Inuit hands are dolls dressed in miniature versions of traditional clothing.



Fashion

North & South



ROSAMORI COLLECTION



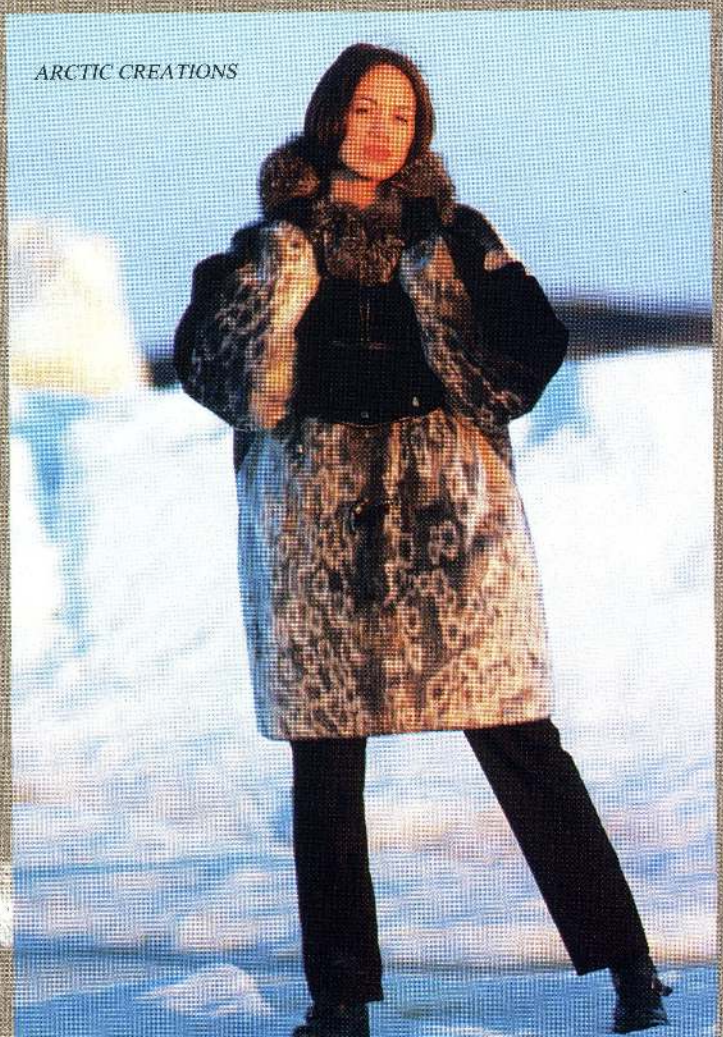
Nunavut residents are showing renewed pride in sealskin. Locally made sealskin coats have been making a comeback, and fashion shows are held each year in Iqaluit and other localities. Many garments use animal bone for buttons and clasps. Besides making a fashion statement, this raises local content and puts waste materials to good use. To symbolize the importance of seal to northerners, the Nunavut legislative assembly has covered its chairs in sealskin, and government officials carry sealskin briefcases.

In Canada, Denmark and other countries, the beauty, versatility, durability and warmth of sealskin inspire designers to create garments that compete with the best the fur world has to offer. Seal also makes an excellent trim for leather or fabric garments. Higher demand for sealskin in key markets can spur new design trends and new opportunities for many Inuit communities.

Fashion says something special about a culture. At its best, fashion blends attention to practical needs with a concern for aesthetic detail. In the Arctic, the primary consideration has been to keep warm, but this has not prevented traditional designs from displaying patterns and colours that pay tribute to an innate feel for beauty and form in the face of adversity.

Inuit have been involved in global trade for more than a century, particularly when it comes to furs. Contemporary northern designs have begun sharing elements and techniques developed in milder climates. At the same time, talented southern designers have shown a renewed interest in sealskin and have adopted elements from Inuit tradition. Programs aimed at increasing the technical proficiency of Nunavut designers and producers are bringing a growing sophistication to locally made garments. In addition, smaller items such as mittens and backpacks are putting sealskin and local initiative to good use.

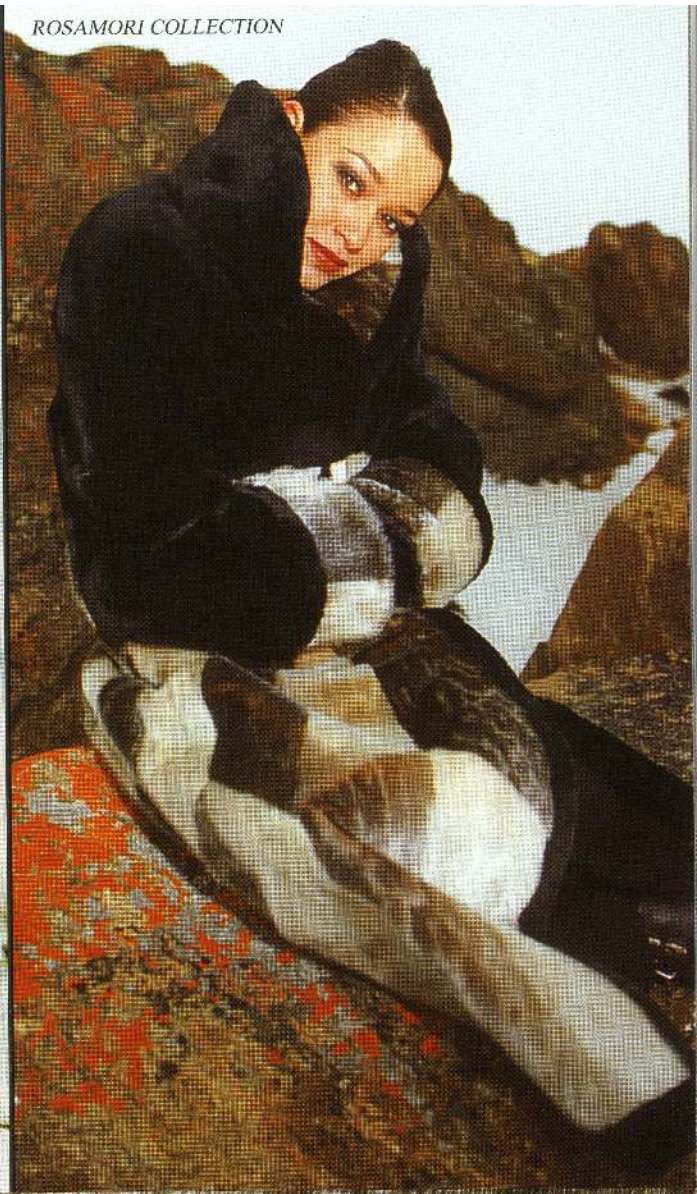
ARCTIC CREATIONS



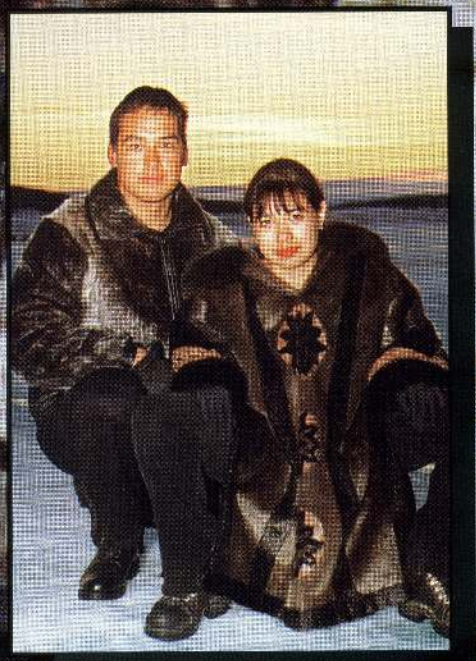
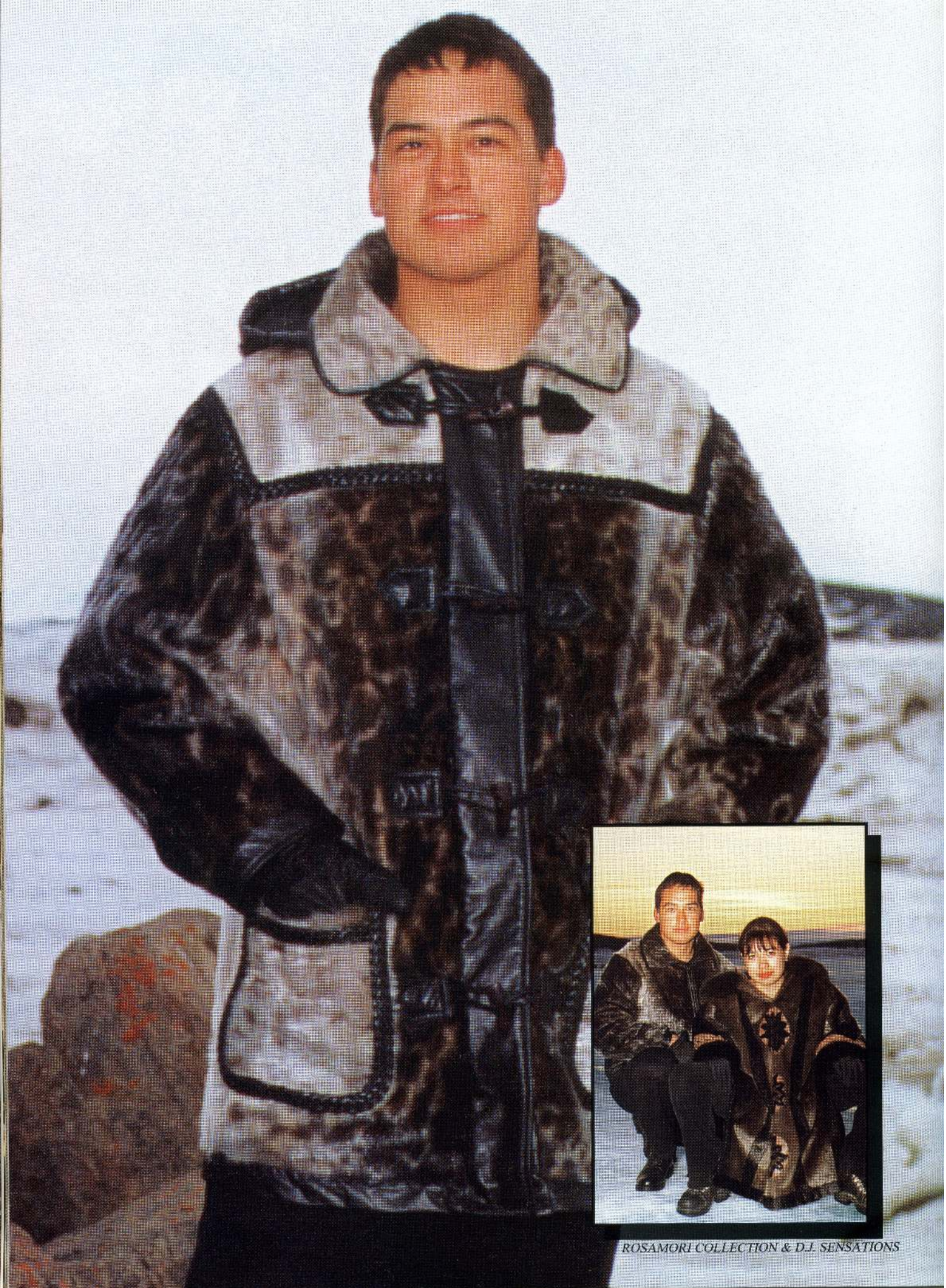


ROSAMORI COLLECTION

ROSAMORI COLLECTION



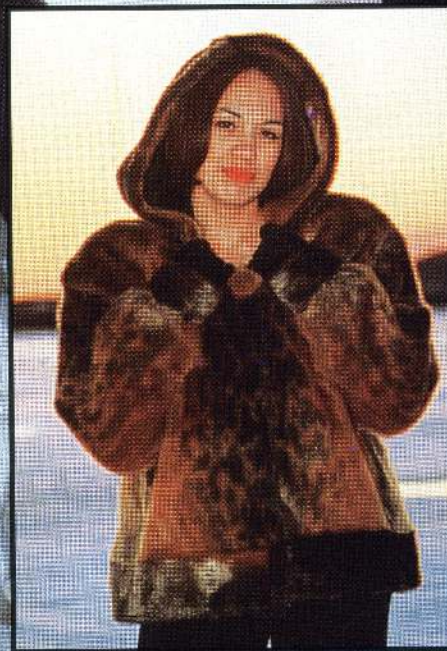
ROSAMORI COLLECTION



ROSAMORI COLLECTION & D.J. SENSATIONS

ROSAMORI COLLECTION

D.J. SENSATIONS





ROSAMORI COLLECTION



D.J. SENSATIONS





D.J. SENSATIONS







ARCTIC CREATIONS



MONTREAL NAFFEM



Montreal's international fur fair, known officially as NAFEM (North American Fur & Fashion Exposition - Montreal), is the only show of its kind in the western hemisphere. This annual event draws 200 exhibitors each year from countries on three continents and provides an ideal showcase to present items made of Nunavut sealskin to buyers from around the world. Nunavut is proud to use this opportunity to enhance its place in world trade.



MONTREAL
NAFFEM



MONTREAL NAFFEM

Celebrating the New Territory

To mark the official creation of Nunavut on April 1, 1999, Inuit drummers and dancers gave a special performance at the 1999 edition of the Montreal fur fair, accompanied by traditional northern food. Rosamori Collection of Montreal and Arctic Creations of Iqaluit used the occasion to present an alluring array of new sealskin fashions.



MONTREAL
NAFFEM



MONTREAL
NAFFEM





ROSAMORI COLLECTION

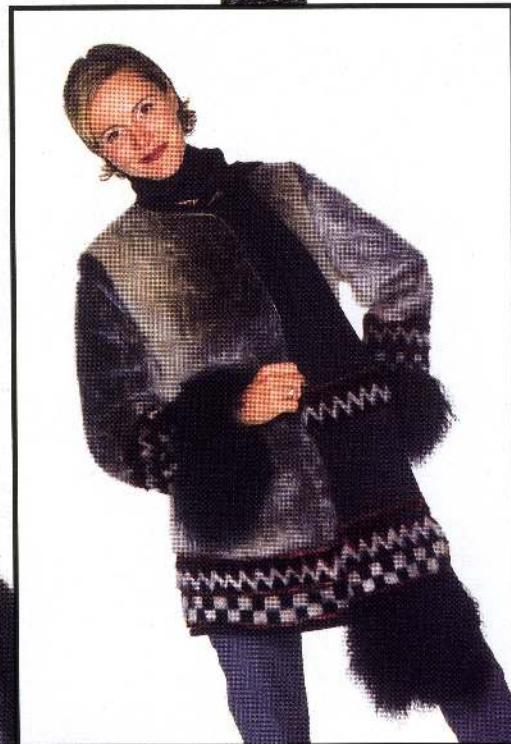




ROSAMORI COLLECTION



ROSAMORI COLLECTION



Building an economic future

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Nunavut is reaching a new turning point in its economic development. For thousands of years, economic activity consisted mainly of hunting and fishing, together with offshoots such as production of clothing and footwear from animal skins. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, foreign whaling vessels provided paid work to people from several communities. In the latter half of the 20th century, the government presence has grown to become the biggest single source of employment and support.

As Nunavut takes increasing control of its destiny and enters a new century, greater economic diversity and a stronger private sector have become the order of the day. A young and fast-growing population will require job and business opportunities based not only on existing pursuits but also on areas of enterprise that are just starting to open up.

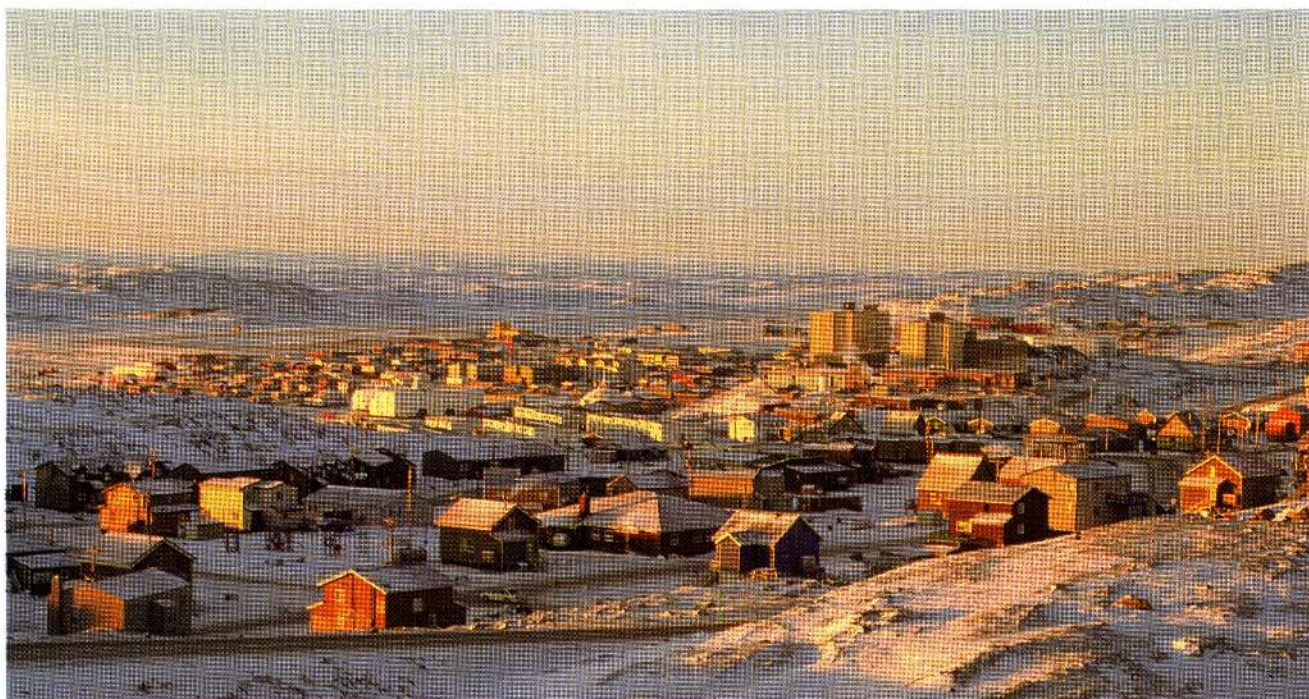
Traditional activities such as hunting and fishing are part of the new economic landscape. In relative terms, they may play a less important role than in the past, but they will continue to provide sustenance for families and communities throughout the territory, providing revenues from the sale of skins and an indispensable alternative to commercial food products. Several

studies have concluded that seal and other wild meats have a high economic value, reaching many tens of millions of dollars annually across Nunavut. Seal-oil capsules are being touted as a potential export product aimed at health-conscious consumers. The fishery is also a source of strength, with Arctic char, turbot and shrimp being shipped to southern markets.

Products from the hands and imaginations of Inuit artists and artisans are providing expanded opportunities for commercial sale and worldwide export. High-quality animal skins, converted into alluring garments, boots and other objects, will provide important work in distant communities, linking them more closely with the world beyond. Artistic creations such as prints and soapstone carvings from Nunavut have enjoyed global acclaim for decades and are being joined by new forms of artistic expression, including top-quality silver and copper jewelry, often with animal motifs.

Tourism is another area slated for impressive growth, and not just during the short summer season with its midnight sun. People from many parts of the world are intrigued by the Arctic winter and the legendary Inuit ingenuity in adapting to it. The worldwide growth in adventure tourism is especially promising

Iqaluit, capitol of Nunavut.



Mary Etunga, an elder in Cambridge with her traditional clothing.



Tessa Macintosh



*Visiting an iceberg up close, near Pangnirtung.
Dan Herlihy*

for Nunavut, together with its expanding phalanx of outfitters and hospitality providers. An impressive network of national and territorial parks forms only part of Nunavut's wilderness paradise. Purchases by visitors also help sustain the local garment and artistic industries.

Mining development holds the greatest promise of large-scale outside investment. Two base metal mines are currently in operation. The Nanisivik lead-zinc mine, in northern Baffin Island, has continued to operate profitably well beyond its expected life span despite a sharp decline in world commodity prices. Nunavut is rich in valuable minerals, including gold, nickel and copper in several places, as well as diamonds further west. Mining companies have reported findings that could lead to the development of gold mines. The size and concentration of some ore bodies can easily overcome high exploration and shipping costs. Mining activity provides the triple benefit of

highly paid employment, royalty payments from the firms involved, and a spur to local commerce.

Government departments and agencies will continue to be major employers, even if their relative weight declines. A good basic telephone infrastructure is in place, paving the way for growth in newer forms of communication such as the Internet, which is widely used in Nunavut. In addition, air links to southern Canada have been increasing.

In the economy as a whole, many challenges lie ahead, including the development of enhanced education and job training to meet the opportunities of tomorrow. Motivation and support are not in short supply. A sense of determination, combined with good, old-fashioned Inuit ingenuity, can go a long way.

Children playing Inuga it, a game played with seal bone.

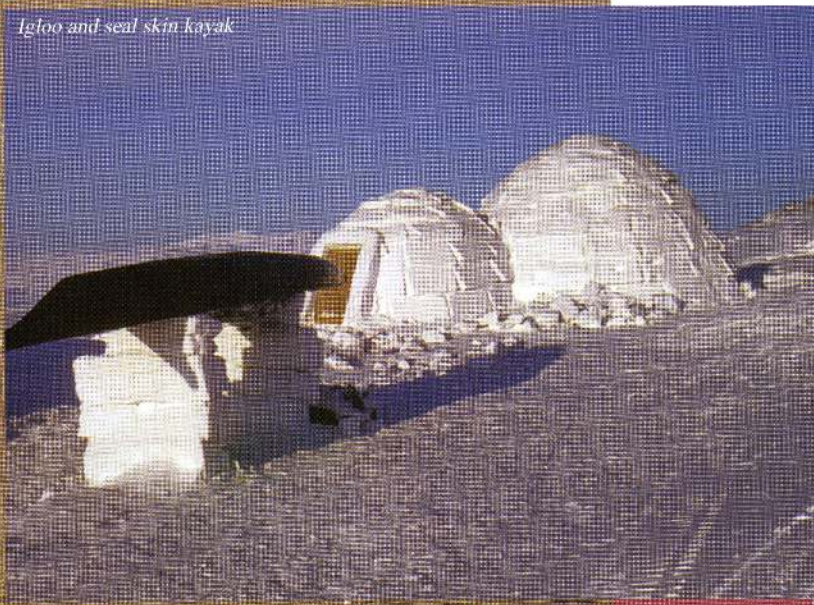


Photograph by David Pusey



Joshua Kango building an igloo

Igloo and seal skin kayak



David Poisey



*Monica Ell, merchant
Arctic Creations, Iqaluit*

“Seal is our meat. I'm trying to save the beautiful skin that comes with our meat. I don't want to throw it away.”

“I am the proprietor of Arctic Creations. We sell sewing supplies, garments, jewelry, seal hats, mitts, sealskin backpacks, and assorted knickknacks. We make our own sealskin products at our sewing centre, where five people are working.”

“Seal is beautiful to look at when it is finished. Opponents of fur are sometimes misinformed. They don't see the other side of the story. Sometimes I feel angry at the way it has affected us. My husband has been a hunter. He has provided my connection to seal. Our lifestyle depends on it.”

“Before starting my business, I was a radio announcer and news editor. They were going to make me a manager. I asked myself if I wanted to be a manager for someone else or for myself. I wanted to see if I could create jobs for myself and for others.”

“When I think of seals, I think first of the food, and then I think of the skin. I like to make everything out of the seal, including mitts and vests, as well as kamiiks, our traditional boots.”

“I do all aspects, from developing ideas to sewing the actual garment. I'm always looking for something with a pattern in it, and I like to try creative ideas that I come up with. One recent thought has been to make Christmas decorations with animal themes. My mind is always creating something. Sometimes I can't go to sleep when my mind is creating. I have to complete my thoughts first.”

“Back in the 1950s and 1960s, I used to follow my father hunting, sometimes for a month or two at a time. We used to go with our dog team. Nowadays people use snowmobiles more. When we were out hunting, we used to sleep either in a tent or an igloo. The igloo is warmer to sleep in during the winter.”



*Elisapee Kilabuk, seamstress
Arctic Creations, Iqaluit*

People

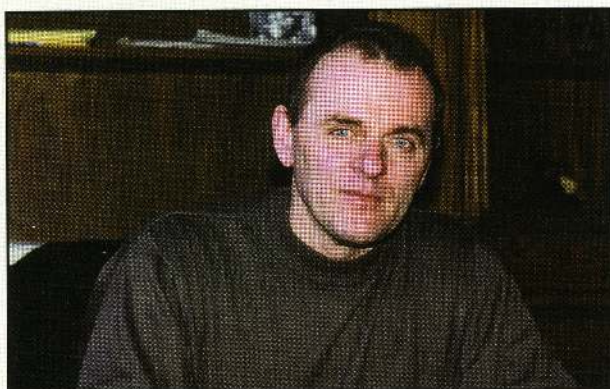
"We've worked in many kinds of furs. Seal was new for us. It's completely different because it lends itself well to all sorts of design techniques."



Irma Paytler, designer
Rosamori Collection, Montreal

"A designer in the fur business doesn't do just design. We follow the whole production process from beginning to end to make sure it's done properly. Here at Rosamori, we work in all sorts of furs, including mink, beaver, fisher, fox, sable, muskrat, coyote — you name it. We're in our third season doing the Nunavut seal collection. This was something new for us as designers and manufacturers. Seal can be mixed with different skins and finishes, as well as braidings, embroidery, even beadwork. We try to incorporate northern handiwork. Seal is very adaptable for various garments and accessories, and it also dyes nicely, although I like it better in its natural shades. We're working with ringed seal from Nunavut, and you can really see the character of the rings. Each skin is different."

"We've taken Nunavut seal to fur fairs around the world. We were really surprised by the interest we found from buyers in Hong Kong. The Asian market loves it. We also took it to Frankfurt, where seal is better known because some Scandinavian designers use it. Working with seal is challenging and fun. The possibilities are endless, and the consumer finds it interesting and beautiful."



Fernand Laflamme, furrier
Rosamori Collection, Montreal

"Seal lends itself well to some very chic designs."

"They're doing some interesting work in Scandinavia, and so are we here. Seal has no underhair and is very sleek. Compared to some other furs, it is easy to cut, shape and style. You can do almost anything you want with it. Seal is water-repellent and very durable. We use Nunavut seal exclusively. My uncle was in the fur business for 60 years, and our family has had extensive ties with people in the Far North. I am happy to renew these connections in the present era."

"As native people ourselves, we understand the cultural and economic importance of seal. We ourselves have always worn fur."



Keith McLeod,
marketing and quality assurance manager
Nipissing First Nation Fur Dressers
North Bay, Ontario

"We process all types of fur from the garment industry. We do dressing, not tanning. A dressed skin is supple and soft, whereas a tanned skin is harder and a little more like boot leather. We receive the skins stretched and died. We wash them first, rehydrate them with a bit of soap and salt, and then scrape them by hand with a sharp benchknife to work the grease out of the leather and to soften up the hide. The skins then go back into the pickle bath to start the preservation and create a slight swelling of the hide. We scrape off any membranes to form an even consistency, and then we dry and oil the skins to give them more elasticity. After sitting for a day or two, the skin is cleaned and the excess oil removed using hardwood sawdust in a drum. The skin is then stretched. The drumming and stretching process is repeated as often as necessary. Then we go to work combing and ironing the fur. After one last stretching, the skins are packed for shipping."

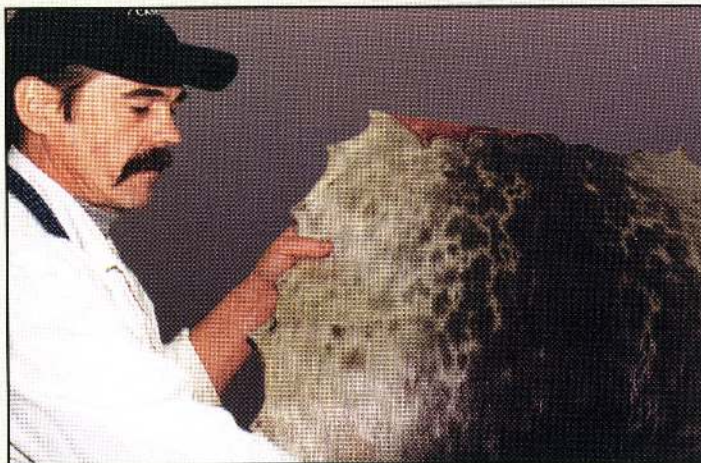
"Beaver accounts for the biggest part of our production, but seal is also important. We do mostly Arctic seal. The skins provided by the Inuit are easy to work with because of the traditional preparation they do. It is very beneficial. Some of the skins are returned to the Arctic to be made into garments and other products there. Seal has nice natural patterns, allowing designers to show a lot of creativity. No two skins are the same, giving each garment an individual look. We are in regular contact with people in the Arctic. The Inuit tend to be good marksmen, and we don't see badly damaged skins."



Susan Urquhart, general manager
Nipissing First Nation Fur Dressers
North Bay, Ontario

"I've been grading seals for 20 years. Each sealskin is different. Seal has straight guard-hair and no underfur, which makes it different from beaver, for instance. In grading seals, I look for damage or for anything breaks a pattern. We have four main quality grades and five colour grades. The clearer or natural colours are most in demand, especially silver and black. Nearly all of the seals here are ringed seals, although we also see a few harp or bearded seals."

"Seals are easier to work with than some other skins because they have no underfur. It is one of the brightest skins. I just can't see a sealskin coat not looking good. It doesn't make the wearer look bulky, and it provides good durability."



Ed Ferguson, seal grader
Fur Harvesters Auction Inc., North Bay, Ontario

*"I like dealing with seals from Nunavut.
They are the best quality, and the people
who harvest them take better care of them."*

*"Nature has only a limited carrying capacity,
and species whose numbers grow too quickly
are prone to starvation and disease."*



Marc Downey, public relations manager
Fur Harvesters Auction Inc.
North Bay, North Bay

"We are a producer-owned cooperative. We are owned by native and non-native trappers, and also by some fur ranchers. Ninety per cent of our sales come from wild furs. Our job is to market fur for the highest possible price to benefit the harvester or rancher. We hold auctions four times a year, and we get buyers from all over the world, usually 100 to 150 buyers at each auction. We deal in 22 species, none of them endangered or threatened. Beaver is our main staple. You should note that there are now more beavers in North America than there were when the first Europeans arrived. The biggest threat to the wildlife population comes from laws that are based on emotion rather than biological observation and time-proven management."

"One of the products we sell is seal, which is another traditional fur-bearing animal that has been harvested for generations on a sustainable basis. The seals we sell come exclusively from the Arctic. They are bought by brokers, who ship many of them to China and eastern Europe. We get the furs raw and dry, and then we grade them according to size, quality and colour. They are bundled and sampled, we produce a catalogue, and we make samples available to buyers. Seal is valued for its long wearability. It is a lightweight and durable skin."



Arctic Creations

sealskin coats, vests, mittens, briefcases, backpacks; Inuit jewelry, novelty items;
Northern representative for Rosamori

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Nipissing First Nation Fur Dressers

dressings of sealskin and other furs
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 web: www.furharvesters.com

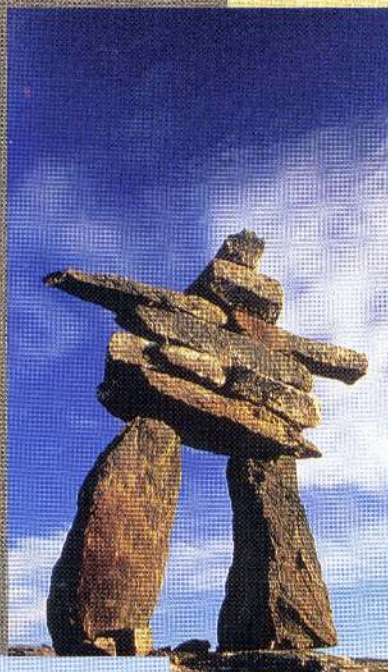
D.J. Sensations

sealskin jackets, vests, mittens, slippers, hats, purses, backpacks; Inuit ivory and antler jewelry, Inuit dolls, pewter items, novelty items

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NUNAVUT INUIT

Published by:
Nunavut Arts & Crafts Association
with the cooperation and advice of:
The Nunavut Department of
Sustainable Development

Co-publisher:	Michael Consiglio
Editor and writer:	Eric Hamovitch
Translator and advisor:	Kirt Ejesiak
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Production coordinator:	Ben Despatie
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Many thanks to the people of Nunavut who lent their support and advice.