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Canada's land area, their small numbers and their remoteness from centres of political power and decision-making left them and their unique way of life little understood by Canadian society.

To enable Inuit (and Canada's other aboriginal peoples) to bring their concerns before government, and to provide government with representative bodies for advice, the government of Canada from the beginning of the 1970s embarked on a policy of providing funds to regional and national Inuit organizations. These funds are used to maintain offices, conduct independent research, hold meetings, publish and broadcast views often critical of government policy, and develop collective objectives. These activities, which have served to focus the political aspirations of the Inuit, have led to the land claims process, the movement to create Inuit-run governments, and meetings with the Canadian prime minister and provincial premiers to renegotiate the Constitution itself in relation to Inuit interests.

The main national organization, Inuit Tapirisat ('Eskimo Brotherhood'), elects its president in a direct vote held in every Inuit community across northern Canada and among Inuit in the main urban concentrations (notably Ottawa) in the south. The annual general meeting of Inuit Tapirisat (to which delegates are elected in each community) serves as a clearing house for all the other national bodies to report and to receive direction. The Inuit Committee on National Issues deals specifically with work on the national Constitution. The Inuit Women's Association is a relatively new body devoted to promoting the social concerns of Inuit women and families through political and administrative reform, and through education and information in Inuit villages. Canadian Inuit also participate in the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, an international organization including the Inuit of Alaska and Greenland, to promote common environmental, human rights, cultural, and economic goals.

Another body, the Nunavut Constitutional Forum (NCF), has the objective of creating a separate territory in the Arctic portion of the NWT, in which the Inuit would be a majority. This new territory would be called Nunavut ('our land', in *Inuktitut*). NCF is developing through research, community meetings, and public information programs, the shape and style of the proposed new government. The movement to create a predominantly Inuit territory originated in the land claims movement, and is a powerful expression of Inuit political determination. The federal government has expressed support for the division of the Northwest Territories, subject to a mutually satisfactory agreement on boundaries between the two new territories.