



# A Constitutional Monarchy

**TERMS & NAMES**  
constitutional  
Parliament  
prime minister  
Pierre Trudeau  
separatist

## MAIN IDEA

Canada is a democracy that protects the rights of individuals and of different cultures.

## WHY IT MATTERS NOW

Canada's form of government has enabled the country to remain united despite conflicts among different groups of citizens.

## DATELINE

**NUNAVUT, CANADA, APRIL 1, 1999**—The Inuit, the native people of Arctic Canada, have today been granted a separate territory in northern Canada. This historic day comes as a result of almost 25 years of negotiations with Canada's government. The Inuit argued that as a First Nations people, they have lived here for at least 4,000 years and have the right to govern their own land.

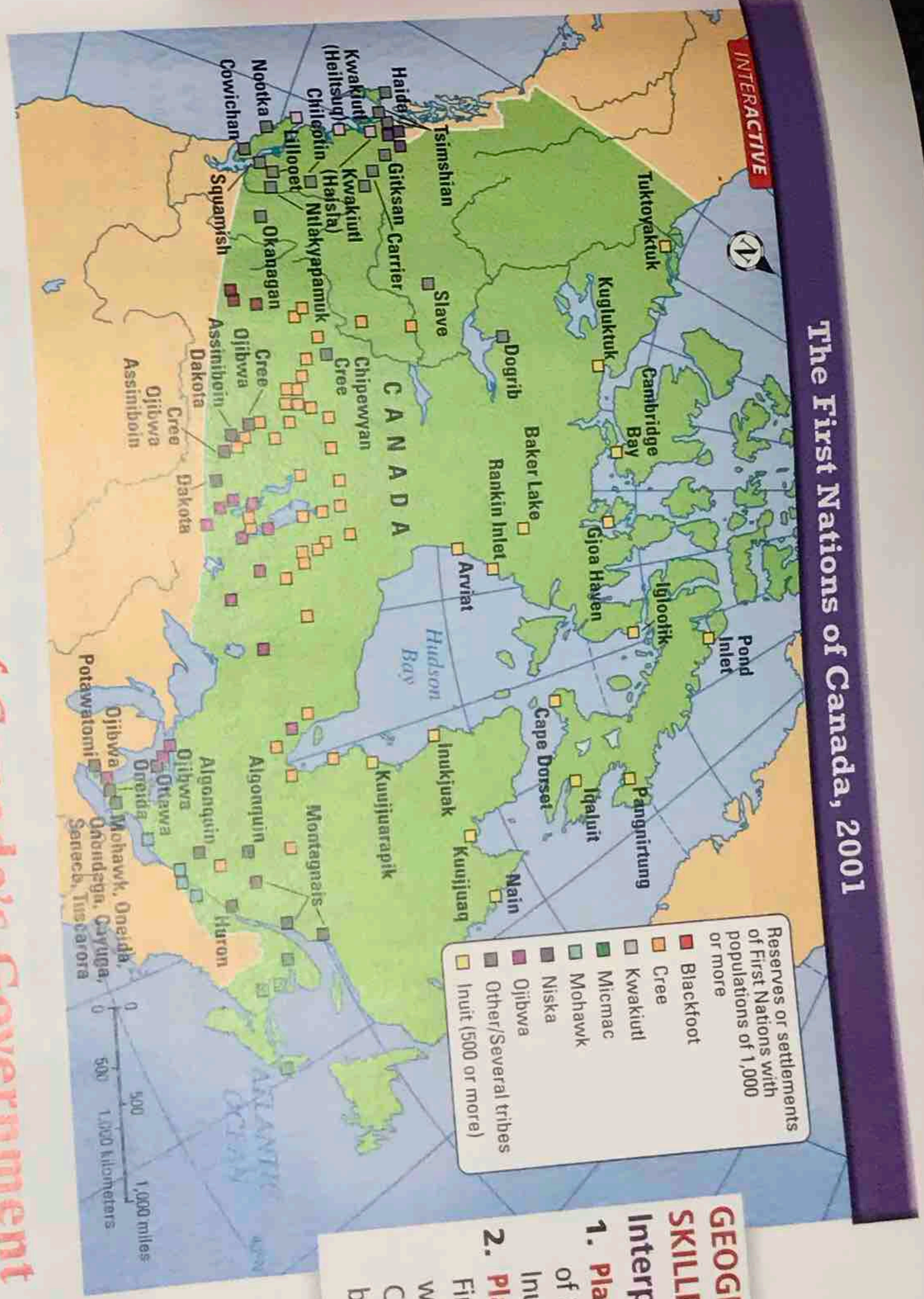
Today the Canadian government turned over 733,600 square miles of land that had been the eastern part of the Northwest Territories. Nunavut (NOO-nuh-woot)—which means "our land" in Inuktitut, the language of the Inuit—becomes the third territory of Canada. The capital is Iqaluit on Baffin Island.



**Place** • The Inuit build igloos out of blocks of snow to use as temporary winter homes. ▲

## A Nation of Provinces and Territories

Other First Nations people also seek the self-government that the Inuit won. At this time, Canada remains a nation of ten provinces and three territories. The responsibilities of the central government include national defense, trade and banking, immigration, criminal law, and postal service. The provincial governments administer education, property rights, local government, hospitals, and provincial taxes. Territorial governments have fewer responsibilities but still enjoy limited self-government.



**The First Nations of Canada, 2001**

## GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER:

### Interpreting a Map

- Place** • In what part of Canada do most Inuits live?
- Place** • Name some First Nations peoples who live along Canada's southern border.

## BACKGROUND

The prime minister and his cabinet are accountable to the members of the House of Commons. If they lose the support of the majority of members, they must resign, or ask the governor-general to dissolve Parliament and call an election.

## Organization of Canada's Government

Canada is a constitutional monarchy. It has a constitution to explain the powers of the government and owes allegiance to a monarch, a king or a queen. The Canadian government consists of the legislative and the judicial branches. Executive duties are within the legislature.

**Head of State** The British monarch is Canada's head of state. Since the queen or king does not live in Canada, she or he selects a governor-general as a representative. The monarch and the governor-general have little genuine power in Canadian government. They represent the historical traditions of Canada.

**Legislature** Canada's legislature, called Parliament, has two bodies, the House of Commons and the Senate. Together they determine Canadian laws and policies. Citizens elect members of the House of Commons. The leader of the party with the most members becomes the head of government, or

**prime minister**, who runs the executive branch within the legislature. Senators are chosen by the prime minister from each of the ten provinces and three territories.



**Location** • The Parliament Buildings in Ottawa, Canada's capital, house the legislature of the central government. ▼