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UNGAVA TULATTAVIK HEALTH CENTER
CENTRE DE SANTÉ TULATTAVIK DE L'UNGAVA

FACT SHEET 5 – THE JAMES BAY AND NORTHERN QUEBEC AGREEMENT (JBNQA)

Understanding the agreement that continues to shape
health care, governance and daily life in Nunavik.

Cultural Safety Team
Reference Guide on Nunavik and Cultural Safety
Sheet 5 of 16





WHY THIS TOPIC IS IMPORTANT AT UTHC

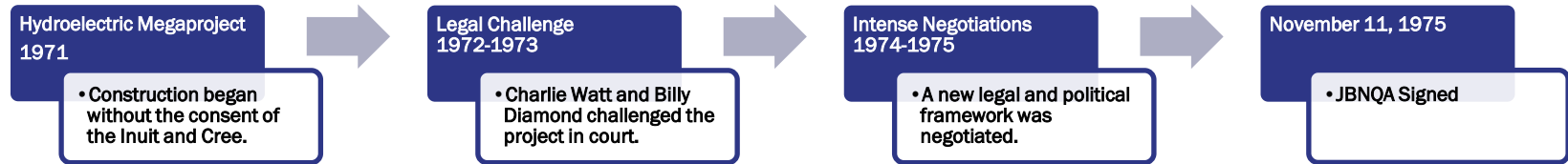
The James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA) is much more than a historic treaty. Signed in 1975, it transformed the relationship between Inuit, governments, and public institutions by recognizing Inuit rights and establishing a new framework for how Nunavik would be governed and developed.

Many of the organizations and services that exist in Nunavik today—including the health and social services system—were created or strengthened through the JBNQA. It continues to influence how decisions are made, how services are organized, and how Inuit participate in shaping their own future.

For UTHC employees, understanding the JBNQA helps explain why Inuit language, culture, partnership, and community participation are essential elements of health care in Nunavik. It also provides important context for understanding cultural safety and Inuit self-determination.

At UTHC, the JBNQA is not simply part of the region's history—it continues to shape the way we work with Inuit communities every day.

How the JBNQA began



IN PERSPECTIVE

The JBNQA serves as the legal foundation that empowers UTHC to replace a colonial medical model with an Inuit-led, culturally safe healthcare system tailored to northern realities.



WHAT IS THE JBNQA?

The James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA) is Canada's first modern treaty, signed in 1975. It is a legally binding agreement between the Inuit, Cree, Naskapi, the governments of Canada and Quebec, and other signatories.

The agreement was negotiated after the proposed James Bay hydroelectric development threatened the traditional lands of Indigenous peoples. Rather than continuing through the courts, the parties negotiated a treaty that recognized Indigenous rights while allowing development to proceed under agreed conditions.

- ✓ Recognizes Inuit, Cree, and Naskapi rights in Northern Quebec
- ✓ Defines ownership and use of different categories of land
- ✓ Protects traditional harvesting rights, such as hunting, fishing, and trapping.
- ✓ Establishes environmental and social protection measures
- ✓ Provides funding and framework for health care, education, local government, economic development, and regional institutions

Fun fact

The JBNQA is the foundation of many services delivered in Nunavik. More than a land claims agreement, it recognizes Inuit rights and shapes how governments and organizations work together to provide health care, education, and other public services. Understanding the JBNQA helps employees appreciate why Inuit language, culture, and partnership are central to working in Nunavik.



HOW THE JBNQA SHAPES NUNAVIK TODAY

The JBNQA continues to influence many aspects of daily life in Nunavik. It provides the legal framework that supports Inuit participation in decisions affecting their communities and helps ensure that services reflect northern realities.

Because of the JBNQA, Inuit organizations play an active role in areas such as health care, education, municipal government, wildlife management, economic development, and environmental protection. These institutions were created to respond to the priorities and needs of Nunavimmiut.

For UTHC employees, understanding the JBNQA means recognizing that many of the partners we work with—and many of the ways services are organized—exist because of this agreement. It also reminds us that collaboration with Inuit communities is not simply good practice; it is a fundamental principle of how Nunavik operates.

JBNQA affect:



Health



Education



Local Government



Environment



Wildlife & Harvesting



Regional Organizations

IN PERSPECTIVE

A partnership built into the system

The JBNQA established a model in which governments, regional organizations and Inuit communities share responsibilities. Working in partnership is therefore not only a value—it is part of how services are designed and delivered in Nunavik.



THE JBNQA: A LIVING AGREEMENT

The James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement is not simply a historic document. It continues to influence how governments, regional organizations, and Inuit communities work together to make decisions and deliver services across Nunavik.

Many organizations that UTHC employees work with every day—including the Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services, the Kativik Regional Government, Makivvik Corporation, and local municipalities—carry responsibilities that stem directly from the JBNQA.

Understanding the agreement helps employees appreciate why partnership, consultation, and respect for Inuit governance are fundamental to working in Nunavik.



DID YOU KNOW? – The JBNQA created more than land rights

The agreement also established or strengthened many of the institutions that continue to serve Nunavik today, including:

- ✓ regional health and social services;
- ✓ education managed in the North;
- ✓ local and regional government;
- ✓ wildlife and environmental management;
- ✓ economic and community development.

Nearly every public service in Nunavik has, in one way or another, been shaped by the JBNQA.



WHAT THE JBNQA CHANGED

Before 1975, many important decisions affecting Nunavik were made outside the region. The JBNQA marked a turning point by recognizing Inuit rights and creating new regional institutions responsible for delivering services closer to the communities.

Today, Inuit participate in decisions about health care, education, local government, environmental protection, wildlife management, and economic development. While challenges remain, the agreement created the foundation for greater Inuit participation in shaping the future of Nunavik.

The JBNQA also recognized that development in Nunavik should take place while respecting Inuit rights, culture, language, and connection to the land.



DID YOU KNOW? – A turning point

The JBNQA led to the creation or strengthening of several regional institutions that continue to serve Nunavik today, including:

- ✓ the **Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services**;
- ✓ the **Kativik School Board**;
- ✓ the **Kativik Regional Government**;
- ✓ environmental and wildlife management bodies;
- ✓ organizations supporting Inuit development and self-determination

These institutions continue to play an essential role in the daily life of Nunavik.



WORKING WITHIN THE JBNQA

The JBNQA is more than a legal agreement—it shapes the way organizations work together in Nunavik. Collaboration, consultation and partnership are fundamental principles that guide many decisions affecting communities.

For UTHC employees, this means recognizing that Inuit organizations are not simply stakeholders. They are partners with important responsibilities and a central role in shaping services across Nunavik.

Understanding this collaborative approach helps build respectful relationships and supports culturally safe practice.



DID YOU KNOW? – Partnership is built into the system

The JBNQA led to the creation or strengthening of several regional institutions that continue to serve Nunavik today, including:

- ✓ recognizing Inuit participation in decision-making;
- ✓ supporting collaboration between regional institutions;
- ✓ promoting services adapted to Nunavik's realities;
- ✓ encouraging dialogue and shared responsibility.

Working in partnership is not just good practice—it is part of how Nunavik's institutions were designed to operate.



MORE THAN A LAND CLAIMS AGREEMENT

The JBNQA is often associated with land rights, but its impact goes much further. It established a new relationship between Inuit and governments by recognizing Inuit rights and creating a framework for regional governance and public services.

The agreement influences many aspects of everyday life in Nunavik, including health care, education, municipal services, environmental protection, and economic development. It also recognizes the importance of Inuit language, culture, and traditional ways of life.

Today, the JBNQA continues to guide how governments, organizations, and communities work together to meet the needs of Nunavimmiut.

DID YOU KNOW? – A living agreement

The JBNQA is still active today.

- ✓ how public services are organized;
- ✓ how regional institutions work together;
- ✓ how development projects are reviewed;
- ✓ how Inuit rights are recognized and protected.

Working in partnership is not just good practice—it is part of how Nunavik's institutions were designed to operate.





IN MY WORK AT THE UTHC

Understanding the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement helps me recognize that Nunavik has its own governance, institutions, and decision-making processes. These are not separate from my work—they are part of the context in which I provide services every day.

The JBNQA reminds me that working in Nunavik means respecting Inuit rights, recognizing the role of regional organizations, and building partnerships with communities rather than making decisions for them.

This understanding can help me to:

- **recognize the importance of Inuit participation** in decisions affecting health and social services;
- **work collaboratively** with regional partners and community organizations;
- **respect the governance structures** established through the JBNQA;
- **better understand the roles** of the organizations that serve Nunavik;
- **support relationships based on partnership, respect, and shared responsibility.**

KEY MESSAGE

The JBNQA is more than a historic treaty. It continues to shape the way organizations work together and supports a partnership-based approach that reflects the realities and priorities of Nunavik.



A FEW WORDS IN INUKTITUT

ᓄᓇ — nuna

Territory • Land

Le mot nuna signifie « territoire » ou « terre ». Pour les Inuit, le territoire est bien plus qu'un espace géographique : il est intimement lié à l'identité, aux savoirs et au mode de vie. C'est autour de ce territoire que s'articule la JBNQA.

ᐃᓄᐅ — Inuk

An Inuk (one person)

Inuk désigne une personne inuit. Au pluriel, on dit Inuit. La JBNQA reconnaît les droits collectifs des Inuit du Nunavik et leur rôle dans les décisions qui concernent leur territoire.

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Beautiful land

Ce mot signifie littéralement « beau territoire ». Il rappelle le lien profond qui unit les Inuit à leur environnement et l'importance de protéger ce territoire pour les générations futures.

The JBNQA is rooted in the relationship between the Inuit and their territory. Learning these words is another way of understanding that connection.



DID YOU KNOW?

.....the JBNQA was Canada's first modern treaty?

Signed in 1975, it became a model for many modern treaties negotiated with Indigenous peoples across Canada.

..... the JBNQA helped shape Nunavik's health and social services system?

It established the framework that led to the development of regional institutions, including the Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services, which coordinates health and social services across the region.

..... the agreement is still active today?

The JBNQA continues to guide how governments, regional organizations and Inuit communities work together to make decisions affecting Nunavik.

.....the JBNQA is more than a land agreement?

It also addresses education, local government, environmental protection, wildlife management, economic development and many other aspects of life in Nunavik.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ **The JBNQA is Canada's first modern treaty**, signed in 1975.
- ✓ **It recognizes Inuit rights** and established a new framework for governance and public services in Nunavik.
- ✓ **The agreement continues to shape daily life** by influencing health care, education, local government, environmental management, and regional partnerships.
- ✓ **Working in Nunavik means understanding and respecting** the institutions, partnerships, and decision-making processes established through the JBNQA.
- ✓ **Knowing the JBNQA helps build stronger relationships** with Inuit communities and supports culturally safe care.

IN PERSPECTIVE

The JBNQA is more than a historic agreement—it remains a living foundation for partnership, self-determination, and collaboration in Nunavik.



REFLECTING ON MY PRACTICE

1. How does understanding the JBNQA help me better understand the way services are organized in Nunavik??
2. Do I recognize Inuit organizations as true partners in planning and delivering services?
3. How can I strengthen collaboration with community members and regional partners in my daily work?
4. How does respecting Inuit governance contribute to culturally safe care?

Closing Thought

Understanding the JBNQA is not about becoming an expert in law—it is about understanding the partnerships, shared responsibilities, and Inuit leadership that continue to shape life and services in Nunavik.



UTHC RECOMMENDATION

Building the Inuit Homeland (Inuktitut & English videos)

Makivvik

In collaboration with animation studio Tonic DNA, Makivvik corporation initiated the 7 part docuseries of not longer then 30 minutes each.

So that you can stand

The 2015 documentary Napagunnaqullusi: So That You Can Stand was directed by Ole Gjerstad. The film's script was written by Bernard Lajoie, Ole Gjerstad, and Jason Annahatak

Why does the UTHC recommend it?

Because it explains the building of Nunavik after the JBNQA was signed and how it began.



GOING FURTHER

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada – [Archives](#)

The CNVR archives contain more than four million documents. The majority of these documents were created or collected by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) as part of its mandate, including survivor testimonies, which constitute the largest collection of perspectives from residential school survivors.

National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) – [Calls to Justice](#)

A reference document that highlights the lasting impacts of colonization on Indigenous peoples and proposes concrete courses of action.

Avataq Cultural Institute - [Blog](#)

To foster exchanges among Nunavimmiuts, the Avataq Cultural Institute provides this virtual space free of charge, led by a young Inuit woman from Nunavik.

Makivik Corporation – [Tarralik](#)

An essential resource for gaining a better understanding of Nunavik's recent history, land claims, and the development of Inuit institutions.

Understanding the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement provides a better understanding of today's Nunavik and the partnerships that enable its communities to shape their future.

