

13th Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

**Report of the
Special Committee on
Western Identity**



September 1999



September 9, 1999

Honourable Sam Gargan
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
Box 1320
YELLOWKNIFE, NT X1A 2L9

Dear Mr. Speaker:

On behalf of the Special Committee on Western Identity, I am pleased to present this report on the activities of the Committee with respect to official symbols and celebrations of the new western territory.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Seamus Henry".

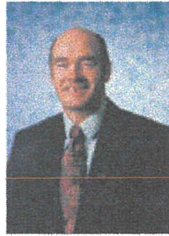
Seamus Henry, MLA
Chair

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Special Committee on Western Identity

Members



Chair
Mr. Seamus Henry
MLA Yellowknife South



Hon. Stephen Kakfwi
MLA Sahtu



Mr. David Krutko
MLA Mackenzie Delta



Mr. James Rabesca
MLA North Slave



Hon. Vince Steen
MLA Nunakput

Committee Staff

Lynda Comerford, Co-ordinator

Overview

Division of the Northwest Territories into two new jurisdictions required many changes to take place – legally, politically and socially. One area identified for review was that of official symbols, which includes among others, the flag, the mace and the coat of arms.

Symbols such as these have always been important to the public they represent. A great deal of ownership and pride is placed on these images – images that are seen as a reflection to the world.

It was, therefore, important to Members of the Legislative Assembly to ensure that the official symbols of the new Northwest Territories be truly representative of the new geographical region and its people. They must reflect the identity of the people and the land – an identity that would be truly worth celebrating.

To that end, the Special Committee on Western Identity was established on June 4, 1998 to consider and make recommendations on official symbols and celebrations for the new Northwest Territories.

Each of the five Committee members had a keen and genuine interest in how the people of the new NWT would consider their new identity, and were honoured to accept a position on the Committee that would help to define and reflect that reality. A Coordinator was hired to handle administrative affairs and ensure the business of the Committee proceeded as directed.

One of the main tasks of the Committee was to review the current official symbols and heraldry of the Northwest Territories. Members needed to determine if the symbols were appropriate for the new territory, or whether they should be revised or completely changed.

The Committee had several recommendations regarding symbols. First of all, it recommended to keep, as is, the bird (gyrfalcon), the flower (mountain avens), the mineral (gold), the tartan and the polar bear licence plate. It then recommended the addition of two new symbols – a gemstone (the diamond) and a fish (the arctic grayling). The Committee also recommended the tamarack be adopted as the official tree of the NWT.



Designs for a new flag and coat of arms were deemed appropriate by the Committee as well, and it was crucial to the Members that the people of the NWT have an opportunity to communicate their thoughts on these symbols. A

nationwide competition for designs was initiated, which resulted in 250 submissions for ideas for the new flag and the new coat of arms.

The Committee is pleased to have selected three designs for each symbol and, due to time limitations, has recommended that the work of the Committee in this area be passed on to another Committee of the 14th Legislative Assembly to carry on with the final selection process.

The final official symbol under consideration by the Committee was the mace. The Northwest Territories needed a new mace that would reflect the new territory. A call for proposals was awarded to three artists well known in the North. The mace is due to be completed by the end of October and the Committee recommends that it be unveiled at the beginning of the 14th Legislative Assembly in the new year.

To develop an awareness of 1999 as a special year of change and new direction for the territory, the Committee developed a visual identity program with an event name and logo – “NWT '99 - Catch the Spirit”. A line of promotional items featuring the festive and colourful logo was developed and distributed at a wide variety of events in the NWT, Canada and overseas.



The NWT '99 spirit set the stage for western identity celebration activities, which was another mandate of the Committee. It became apparent to the Members that the most appropriate way to celebrate the life of each community would be in each community. It also seemed appropriate that each community should decide how and when during the year they would like to celebrate their identity in the new territory.

A one-time grant of \$5000 was made available to every community in the Northwest Territories for events or projects which reflected our new western identity. Those events were posted on the NWT '99 website calendar and communities were welcome to post photos of their events afterwards.

While official symbols may depict the land and the people, a true “western identity” in the hearts of the people is not something that happens overnight. The new NWT is on a road to a new future, and it is this future – of one land, many voices – that will create new identity.

Summary of Recommendations

1. The Special Committee on Western Identity recommends that the diamond be adopted as the official gemstone of the Northwest Territories.
2. The Special Committee on Western Identity recommends that the arctic grayling be adopted as the official fish of the Northwest Territories.
3. The Special Committee on Western Identity recommends that the tamarack be adopted as the official tree of the Northwest Territories.
4. The Special Committee on Western Identity recommends that the current mace, used since 1959, be retired and placed on permanent display;

And further, that the new mace of the Northwest Territories, commissioned by the Special Committee on Western Identity on behalf of the Legislative Assembly, be used at the first session of the 14th Legislative Assembly.

5. The Special Committee on Western Identity recommends that the proposed designs for a new flag and coat of arms finalized to date be passed to a Committee of the 14th Legislative Assembly to allow that Assembly to carry out the next steps leading to the final selection and adoption of these new symbols.

Communication

Communicating the work of the Committee to the public was an important factor to all Members, but even more important, was ensuring that residents of the new territory had opportunities to share their thoughts and ideas with the Committee. In addition to the option of contacting their MLAs, the public was provided with traditional and hi-tech methods of two-way communication.

Toll Free Telephone and Fax Lines

The toll free telephone and fax lines to the Legislative Assembly were advertised as a means for people to make suggestions or comments on Western Identity activities and issues.

Website

Keeping in stride with the times, the Committee felt it imperative to establish a website where it could share information with the public, as well as receive comments and feedback related to various Committee initiatives.

A website was developed by Duct Tape Omnimedia and publicly launched in February 1999. A very lively and upbeat interactive website, "nwt99.com" offers information or participation on the following topics:

- Coming Events
 - monthly calendar listing of all official NWT '99 celebrations.
- Committee Information
 - Committee mandate, member photos and biographical information.
- Contact Information
 - to contact Coordinator
- News releases
- Symbols of the NWT
 - photos and descriptions of the nine official symbols of the territory, as well as the Legislative Assembly.
 - condensed version of the coat of arms and flag competition brochure; allowed viewers to submit designs or survey information electronically.

- Community Celebrations
 - information on celebration events listed by community.
 - events submission page to advertise pertinent events in the NWT '99 calendar on the main page

- Have Your Say
 - Message/Chat Board for public discussions.
 - Guestbook for public comments.
 - Where Are You Now? page allows former residents to log in, make comments and let people know where they are now living.

- NWT Info
 - timeline of historic cultural, economic and political events, starting from 7000 BC.
 - provides links to other sites for information on the constitution, maps, the GNWT, the Bureau of Statistics, wildlife, economic development, official languages, weather, tourism information, sports in the North, festivals, mining, airlines and community profiles.

- Northern Voices
 - Northern Trivia questions that can be answered and/or submitted.
 - NWT Scrapbook, where visitors can submit photos of favourite places, people, memories, etc.
 - Tall Tales From the Land of the Midnight Sun, where visitors can submit stories of the North.



Traffic to the site has been very healthy since it was launched, with 64,392 hits to date. This translates to over 7,7171 separate visits to the site in the short timeframe of six and half months. The guest book has been very active, with 98 per cent of the comments being extremely positive and very complementary on the layout and design of the site. Well wishes to the new territory are also quite popular and several teachers have commented on the educational value of the site.

The 7,000 plus visits to date have come mainly from the United States and Canada. Other countries that have registered visits are Germany, Finland, Australia, United Kingdom, France, Austria, Japan, United Arab Emirates and Singapore.

Promotion

Identity Campaign

In an effort to generate interest, excitement and general awareness, a celebration name and logo were developed -- "NWT '99 - Catch the Spirit". Colourful and festive, the logo depicts four characters dancing together in celebration.

Advertising

As a build up to April 1, a series of NWT trivia ads were run on CJCD Radio. These "Did You Knows" provided interesting facts about the new NWT and were later incorporated into the website trivia listing.

In July 1999, a two week campaign was conducted to remind people of the approaching deadline for the flag and coat of arms competitions. Print advertising was placed in News North and the French newspaper, L'Aquilon. Television ads were placed on cable channels in Inuvik, Fort Smith, Hay River and Yellowknife. Radio ads were placed on CJCD, which broadcasts in the Hay River and Yellowknife regions.

Arrangements were also made to have the NWT '99 logo included in the continuous television advertising at the Yellowknife Airport. It is slated to run until the end of 1999.

Promotional Items

To support the identity campaign, a series of promotional items were developed using the NWT '99 logo. They included paper flags, stickers, buttons, balloons, lapel pins and bumper stickers.

Quantities of these items were supplied to every community in the NWT to use in conjunction with celebration activities. In addition, items were provided for a large number of conferences and events within the NWT, Canada and worldwide; to various NWT schools; to all MLAs; to the seven major visitor centres in the NWT; at all First Air airport counters; to several libraries and on individual request.

Celebrations

NWT '99 Celebration Grant

In an effort to stimulate celebrations at the local level, the Committee initiated a one-time grant of \$5000 available to all NWT communities, to be used anytime between March 15 and August 15, 1999. The purpose of the grant was to allow communities to organize celebrations of the new territory that were meaningful to them and that recognized our "western identity".

Many communities chose to use the funds to support events which featured traditional northern games, competitions and culture. Many communities come together as one at these events, promoting the new western spirit in the familiar haven of tradition. Other grant activities and projects included workshops, youth days, assemblies, community flags and festivals.

March 31/April 1 Celebrations

The Committee assisted the Speaker and the Legislative Assembly in organizing a celebration at the Ceremonial Circle site in Yellowknife on March 31, 1999. This landmark event brought together hundreds of people from the new Northwest Territories for an evening that would mark a new beginning in the history of the North.

Despite cool temperatures, families and friends congregated at the site in anticipation of a once-in-a-lifetime event. Notable dignitaries in attendance for the occasion included representatives from the Government of Canada (Western Arctic MP, Ethel Blondin-Andrew and Commissioner of the NWT, Dan Marion); the Government of the Northwest Territories (Premier Jim Antoine); the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories (Speaker Samuel Gargan); the Dene Nation (Bill Erasmus); the Metis Nation of the NWT (Gary Bohnet); the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation (William Day); the City of Yellowknife (Mayor David Lovell); the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (Chief Superintendent W. M. Sweeney); and the Department of National Defence (Lt. Colonel Backstrom).

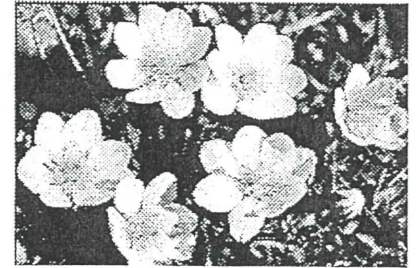
NWT '99 promotional items (buttons, flags and pins), NWT and Canadian flags were distributed among the festive crowd. Flags waved high as onlookers watched a special flag raising ceremony to acknowledge the partners in the project – the same groups that are now partners in a new territory.

Formalities aside, the evening climaxed with the largest fireworks display ever witnessed in the Northwest Territories. Among the applause, flashing cameras and steaming cups of cocoa, April 1, 1999 was ushered in -- a new age and a new beginning for the Northwest Territories.

Official Symbols

A major part of the Committee's mandate was to consider the official symbols of the Northwest Territories. The nine symbols they reviewed included the following:

- flag
- coat of arms
- flower - mountain avens
- bird - gyrfalcon
- mineral - gold
- tartan - NWT tartan
- tree - jack pine
- mace
- licence plate - polar bear

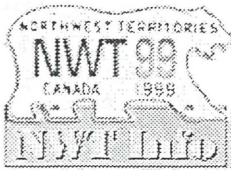


Careful consideration was given to each symbol and whether it remained a good representation of the "new NWT". The Committee's options were to recommend whether to retain them, revise them or completely change them.

The Flower, Bird, Mineral, Tartan, Licence Plate

On November 19, 1998, the Committee announced its recommendation to keep the following symbols:

- flower - mountain avens
- bird - gyrfalcon
- mineral - gold
- tartan - NWT tartan
- licence plate - polar bear



While the licence plate issue caused the most public reaction, it was never the Committee's intention to replace the distinctive licence plate. It will remain a shared symbol of our identity with our sister territory of Nunavut.

The Gemstone, Fish

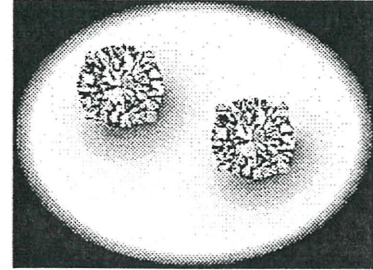
Acting on public input, the Committee is recommending the introduction of two new symbols – a gemstone and a fish.

The gemstone symbol would be depicted by the diamond. This is in recognition of the NWT as the location of Canada's, and indeed North America's, first diamond mine and a sparkling new symbol of our economic future.

The fish symbol would be represented by the arctic grayling. This fish is found in a broad range of habitats throughout the entire territory and has the ability to live in the harshest environments. In addition, the NWT holds the world record for the largest arctic grayling catch. The introduction of an official fish symbol also pays tribute to the longstanding, worldwide recognition the NWT has achieved for commercial, subsistence and sport fishing.

Recommendation #1

The Special Committee on Western Identity recommends that the diamond be adopted as the official gemstone of the Northwest Territories.



Recommendation #2

The Special Committee on Western Identity recommends that the arctic grayling be adopted as the official fish of the Northwest Territories.

The Tree

The current official tree of the Northwest Territories is the jack pine, which was chosen through a territorial-wide ballot in 1990. After considerable discussion and research, it was determined that the jack pine is not indigenous to the entire NWT, so therefore, the Committee felt it was not fully representative as an official symbol.

Many of the NWT's most common trees are already official symbols of other territories or provinces. After much consideration, the Committee is recommending that the official tree be changed from the jack pine to the tamarack, which is more prolific across the landscape of the Northwest Territories.

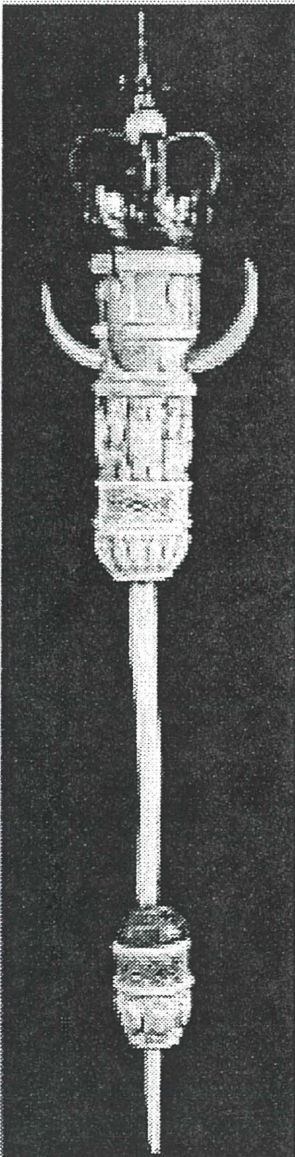
Recommendation #3

The Special Committee on Western Identity recommends that the tamarack be adopted as the official tree of the Northwest Territories.

The Mace

As the official symbol of the authority of the Legislative Assembly, the mace is held in high regard, not only as a political symbol, but as a symbol of the people it represents.

The mace that has been in use in the Northwest Territories since 1959 is a gold plated brass replica of the original design. The delicate and priceless original was deteriorating due to shipping and handling over the years and is now housed under environmentally controlled conditions in the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre in Yellowknife.



The original mace and the replica include many elements of both the western and eastern arctic as it was before division. An additional element of eastern arctic representation is the fact that the original mace was made by eight Inuit craftsmen from the Nunavut community of Cape Dorset.

It was quite apparent to the Committee that – as an official symbol of the Northwest Territories – a new mace should be created. The new territory should have a mace that would be truly reflective of its new geographical boundaries, its first peoples and the diversity of cultures that endure today.

A request for proposals was initiated in January 1999. The Committee was actively involved in the proposal review process and the final selection. The successful bid was awarded to a group of three artists, well-known not only in the North, but internationally.

The team consisted of Bill Nasogaluak, a painter and carver from Tuktoyaktuk; Dolphus Cadieux, a printmaker, sculptor and painter from Yellowknife; and Allyson Simmie, a metalsmith and jeweller from Ottawa, who has been working in the North for several years.

To ensure durability and longevity, much of the new mace is being created in metal. To guarantee maximum quality and craftsmanship, the artist team chose to work in the Ottawa area, where they would be close to high tech machinery, tools and the assistance of some of the finest metalsmiths in Canada.

The Committee is confident that the new mace of the Northwest Territories will speak of the land and its peoples, and will be a source of great pride to all NWT residents. It will be one of the most unique mace designs in the world

and the Committee looks forward to its official unveiling during the first sitting of the new Legislature in early 2000.

Recommendation #4

The Special Committee on Western Identity recommends that the current mace, used since 1959, be retired and placed on permanent display;

And further, that the new mace of the Northwest Territories, commissioned by the Special Committee on Western Identity on behalf of the Legislative Assembly, be used at the first session of the 14th Legislative Assembly.

Mace Visual Recording Project

The new mace of the NWT is likely to be in existence for many years to come. The Committee felt it would be prudent to visually capture such an historic event for the benefit of future generations. It was decided to document the event through video and photography. A call for proposals was tendered in May 1999.

The successful proponent was a production team of five NWT businesses: Lone Wolf Television Production Services; Milligan MediaWorks; Spiritwalker Productions; Swan Productions; and Yellowknife Films.

The group was commissioned to produce two videos, as well as a set of colour and black and white photographs. One video will be a documentary approximately 30 minutes in length. It will provide background on the mace and artistically highlight the different features of the new design, along with the exciting process the artists followed to create this priceless and symbolic work.

A second video, approximately five minutes in length, is more tourism oriented. It will document the features of the mace in relation to the various regions and people of the NWT that it represents.

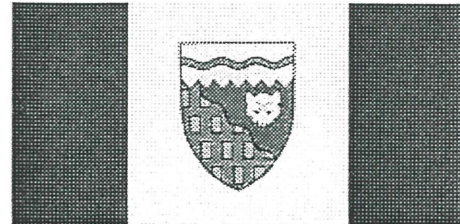
Both videos, as well as the photography package, will include the official unveiling of the new mace in the Legislative Assembly, so will be completed in the new year.

The Flag and Coat of Arms

When the Committee reviewed the symbolism represented in the current flag and coat of arms, it was apparent, as with the mace, that several elements showed strong affiliation with the eastern arctic.

The coat of arms consists of a crest and a shield. The crest portrays two narwhals and the compass rose. Narwhals are creatures of the eastern arctic, and the magnetic North Pole – symbolized by the compass rose – is now located in Nunavut. The shield is fairly unaffected, other than to note that the blue wavy line at the top represents the Northwest Passage, the bulk of which is situated in Nunavut.

The flag carries the shield portion of the coat of arms. The question the Committee considered was, if the territory was to have a new coat of arms, would it be appropriate to have the old shield as part of the flag? After much discussion, the Committee decided to put the two symbols out for public competition to see what residents of the NWT would recommend.



They decided it would be appropriate to have the competition open to all residents of Canada.

A colourful and informative brochure was developed to support the two competitions, offering background information on heraldry, examples of other flags and coats of arms, sources for further research, a checklist survey for coat of arms suggestions from “non-artists”, as well as contact numbers and an address for further information if required.

The brochures were sent out to every residence in the Northwest Territories in May 1999, as per Canada Post listings. Bulk quantities were also sent to all municipal and band offices, and to the seven main visitors centres throughout the NWT. They were also distributed on request to miscellaneous individuals, school classes, public libraries and retail outlets. An abbreviated version of the brochure was also posted on the NWT '99 website, providing visitors with the opportunity to submit written or graphic submissions.

A French version of the brochure was also produced and distributed to the territorial French association, Federation Franco-Tenoise. Copies were also sent to the two French schools in Yellowknife.

In conjunction with the brochure, two school kits were developed consisting of classroom activity sheets and colourful information cards. One kit was targeted for grades 1 - 3, while the other was developed for grades 4 - 8. The kits provided basic information on heraldry and flags, offering creative opportunities to gain an understanding of the meaning of these symbols. Thought provoking questions provided the creative stimulus for ideas the children might have for new symbols. The kits were distributed to every school in the NWT that has grades 1 - 8.

The deadline for the flag and coat of arms competitions was July 30, 1999. A total of 250 entries were received for both categories in the two month period. The Committee was very pleased with such a large response in a such a short timeframe.

The bulk of competition submissions came from the NWT, showing a good cross section of communities across the territory, as well as various age groups. Several submissions were also received from British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario, Nunavut, and one from as far away as Greenland.

Submissions were received in both English and French, from entrants spanning age 3 to 66. The average range in age was from 8 to 39, with strong representation from the 12 to 16 age group.



It was important to the Committee to acknowledge the contribution and effort that every individual made in taking the time to send in a submission. Specially prepared certificates and folders will be issued to all participants, as well as a complimentary NWT '99 lapel pin.

On August 23 and 24, the Committee reviewed all the competition submissions for new flag and new coat of arms designs. Following the tradition of all Canada's provinces and territories – most recently Nunavut – the Committee was pleased to enlist the assistance of the Governor General's Office to guide it through the official process of creating new heraldic symbols.

The Chief Herald of Canada, Mr. Robert Watt, offered his services and assistance throughout the process. After two days of intensive review, a shortlist of submissions for both symbols was identified. The selected designs were provided to the Chief Herald to carry out his role of documenting and refining the designs with respect to the rules of heraldry.

Further review by the Committee has established a final set of three designs each for the flag and the coat of arms. Due to time limitations relating to the general election, a formal approval process – both by NWT residents and the Office of the Chief Herald – is not possible before the dissolution of this Assembly.

Recommendation #5

The Special Committee on Western Identity recommends that the proposed designs for the new flag and coat of arms finalized to date be passed to a Committee of the 14th Legislative Assembly to allow that Assembly to carry out the next steps leading to the final selection and adoption of these new symbols.

Acknowledgement

Recommendations for official symbols for the new Northwest Territories have been presented, including a new flag and a new coat of arms. A new mace, that will be the pride of northerners for generations to come, is in progress, and will shortly be unveiled for all the world to see. Successful celebrations to mark the new western territory were planned in every community in the Northwest Territories.

Many thanks to all who participated – from the many who shared their designs ideas in the competitions, to the artisans, filmmakers and contractors who were all an important part of all the work that has been done to date. A special thanks to the Chief Herald of Canada for his assistance, and last but not least, many thanks to the Committee Coordinator, Lynda Comerford. Her tireless efforts and organization on behalf of the Committee are very much acknowledged and appreciated.

The Special Committee on Western Identity is honoured to have been involved in this historical work and is very pleased to have been able to accomplish its mandate with the help of so many. True identity lies in the hearts of its people.

Appendices

- A. Motion Establishing the
Special Committee on Western Identity
- B. Excerpts from NWT '99 Website

Motion
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**ESTABLISHMENT OF A
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON WESTERN IDENTITY**

I MOVE, seconded by the Honourable Member for Thebacha, that this Legislative Assembly establish a Special Committee to be named the Special Committee on Western Identity;

AND FURTHER, that the following Members are appointed to the Special Committee:

- Mr. Seamus Henry
- Hon. Stephen Kakfwi
- Mr. David Krutko
- Mr. James Rabesca
- Mr. Vince Steen

AND FURTHERMORE, that the terms of reference for the Special Committee on Western Identity be established as follows:

The Special Committee on Western Identity shall:

1. Consider and make recommendations on the official symbols and heraldry for the western Northwest Territories including but not limited to:
 - a) Coat of Arms
 - b) Seal of the Territory
 - c) Flag
 - d) Flower
 - e) Bird
 - f) Tree
 - g) Metal
 - h) Tartan

2. Consider and make recommendations on events and activities that would celebrate the new identity for the western Northwest Territories;

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3. Develop a celebration plan of events and activities to mark the creation of the western Northwest Territories;
4. Provide opportunities for all western Northwest Territories residents to provide input to, and be partners in, the work of the Special Committee;
5. Oversee the implementation of the elements of the approved celebration plan; and
6. Consider and recommend on any other matter that in the opinion of the Special Committee is within its responsibilities respecting western identity and the celebration of the new Western Territory.

AND FURTHERMORE, that the Special Committee shall:

- a) conduct its business in a manner approved by the Committee and in accordance with the Rules of the Legislative Assembly;
- b) be provided with the necessary administrative and professional support by the Legislative Assembly and Government of the Northwest Territories;
- c) be empowered to retain the services of such professional staff and advisors as deemed advisable by the Committee;
- d) be provided with the necessary funds to carry out its responsibilities from the appropriations of the Legislative Assembly; and
- e) if deemed necessary by the Special Committee in carrying out its work, establish sub-committees that may require the appointment of ex-officio members.



Located in the NWT, _____ is the **highest** of its kind in Canada.

**Gertrude's
Geiser**

Pick me.

**Virginia
Falls**

Pick me.

**George's
Gorge**

Pick me.



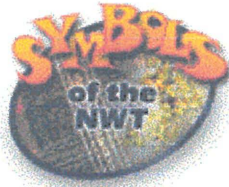
In case you didn't get it, the right choice is:

Virginia Falls

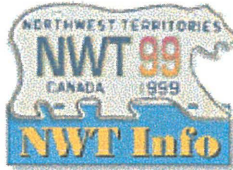


Only in the NWT, you say!

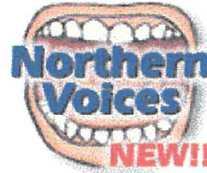
Just when you thought you had seen it all, along comes another Tall Tale about the North. Got one?



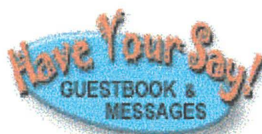
Symbols of the NWT



NWT Info



Northern Voices



Have Your Say!



Community Celebrations

Special Committee on Western Identity
Committee Info • Contacts • News Releases

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