



JADE

Canadian Jade

Nephrite has been used by aboriginal people in Canada for thousands of years for axe heads, knives, and other tools. Nephrite artifacts dating back 4000 years were discovered at Salish cultural sites near Lillooet, British Columbia. Nephrite artifacts have been found over much of the Arctic coast and on the Arctic Islands. An Inuit adze, found on Victoria Island, has a nephrite blade bound to a bone handle.



Copper Inuit adze with jade blade, Victoria Island

Royal Ontario Museum, with permission © ROM

Canada has the world's largest proven reserves of nephrite, enough to supply world demand for 300 years. Most of Canada's nephrite is found in British Columbia and the Yukon along a belt

trending northwest from the US border near Hope, B.C. to the Yukon, north of Watson Lake. Minor amounts of nephrite have been found in Newfoundland.

British Columbia's nephrite is found in more than a dozen shades, depending on trace elements such as iron, chromium, and manganese, ranging from white to near-black, but the most common colour is green. Only about 20% of the nephrite found is gem quality. The rest is good for carving and ornamental stone.



Jade fireplace

© S. McKeown, Six Rock, Yukon



Jade incense burner

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DID YOU KNOW?

- Jade is the official gemstone of British Columbia
- Nephrite is too hard to carve using chisels: it is sawn and polished using diamond-tipped tools and abrasives
- Jade polishing techniques and compounds are closely guarded secrets
- The surface of a jade boulder is grey or brown, and it's only when it is cut that the colour is revealed
- The largest piece of nephrite ever found is from B.C. – 'Big Papa' is a boulder that weighs about 152 tonnes and is worth over a million dollars
- Polar Pride: The world's largest piece of gem-quality nephrite is an 18-tonne boulder (4.3 x 2.0 m) – it will be carved into the world's largest solid jade statue of Buddha for a temple in Australia



Diamond-tipped saw, cutting jade boulder

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"Polar Pride" jade boulder, from the Polar Jade Mine, near Dease Lake, British Columbia

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