

Inukjuak Archaeological Fieldwork

2007



Avataq Cultural Institute

Archaeological research on Drayton Island and its environs, near Inukjuak, summer 2007

by Pierre M. Desrosiers

A team of about twenty people participated in the excavation of an archaeological site on Drayton Island (Ib6k-3), and also carried out a brief archaeological survey of the area. These projects, which were part of Avataq's involvement in the International Polar Year (IPY), were initiated by Daniel Gendron and carried out by Pierre M. Desrosiers and a team composed of Tommy Weetaluktuk (archaeologist), Sackariassie Pauloosie (hunter-guide), Allie Nalukturuk (hunter-guide), Annie Kokiapik (cook), Mae Partridge (cook), and Paulusie Inukpuk and Chris Amgiyou - assistant hunter-guides..

Two students from Europe also participated: Claire Houmard (doctoral student, Université Paris 10, France) and Enrico Foietta (undergraduate student, Italy).

Meanwhile, nine Inuit students did a 4-week apprenticeship in excavation methods including surveying, technical drawing, using grids and recovering artifacts. The students were Natalie Echalook, Abraham Kasudluak Mina, Abilie Williams, Mogan Kasudluak, Stephan Mina, Tommy Niviaxie, Allie Aculiak, Moses Idlout and Susie Mina. Some of these students also had the chance to receive some training in geography from a team of geomorphologists from Université Laval who accompanied our research team. The Université Laval group was led by Najat Bhiry and included Anne-Marie Lemieux, Elsa Censig and Bryan Sinkunas.

Our excavations allowed us to establish a number of facts about the Ib6k-3 site. It appears that it was occupied by the Palaeoeskimos during a period possibly more than 2,500 years ago. About 2,000 years later, the site was re-occupied by Inuit who built qarmait (semi-subterranean houses) with tunnel entrance. For the moment, only a small portion of the site has been excavated, but this has already produced some significant findings. We discovered some wood that had been used to build the roofs of the dwellings, which is a very rare substance in the eastern Arctic.

We have not yet begun the analytical phase of our research, but we already foresee that these discoveries will lead to a better understanding of the early construction techniques for dwellings. In addition, our brief archaeological survey led to the identification of more than forty new sites, mostly on Drayton Island but also on Harrison and Patterson islands. This serves as an indication of the rich archaeological heritage of the area, especially on the islands. The sites we discovered included some summer dwellings, secondary structures such as fox traps, caches and graves, and numerous Palaeoeskimo sites. We also found a number of siltite quarries. (siltite is a rock that was used for making tools.)







Setting up Camp

left page:
Sackariassie
Pauloosie
transporting the
equipment to
Kittuqajjaq (Drayton
Island)



A team of twenty people equals a lot of equipment!



The first week was used to prepare the site prior to the arrival of the students.

(photos) Claire Houmard and Enrico Foietta using yellow pegs and nails to outline square metres located with the help of a theodolite.

This was done to allow us to record the exact location of each artefact that will be collected on the site.





(Above) Sackariassie Pauloosie and Tommy Weetaluktuk setting up the large tent that will serve both as a kitchen and as a field laboratory.





"Tommy look! look!" Look what I have found!

Behind House 1, the students are discovering the remains of an old Palaeoeskimo occupation.

Stone tools, flakes and charcoal are found in each square

Break Time!



Digging up the Past



Moses Idlout



Natalie Echalook



Stephan Mina



Kinaa? Who would like to volunteer? Sieving time! Of course everybody likes it!



Tommy Nivaxie



Abraham Kasudluak Mina



Allie Aculiak

Field Laboratory



Field Laboratory work includes many tasks, such as drying and sorting the sieving material and working on the preliminary treatment of the artefacts until late into the night.

Hard work does not mean that we are not having fun!



Magan Kasudluak



Abilie Williams



Claire Houmard



Enrico Foietta



Upper right: Mae Partridge
and Allie Nalukturuk



Lower right : Sackariassie
Pauloosie and
Chris Amgiyou

Geoarchaeologists work mainly with soil samples. Wood samples are also collected in order to determine the wood's origin.



The Université Laval group was led by Najat Bhiry and included Anne-Marie Lemieux, Elsa Censig and Bryan Sinkunas.

right page: No Wood, No Fire! (Bryan)



Mosquito days! and Fieldwork Conditions



Excavating a site requires endurance. Whether it's raining, windy, cold, foggy- or worse! - a mosquito day, brave students are still focused on their work!



Upper left: Small branches found on top of the bed in the back of the dwelling that was being excavated.



Big wood logs were used to make the roof of the structure.

Origin of the wood

Avataq archaeologists, Tommy Weetaluktuk and Pierre M. Desrosiers are explaining what they understand so far from the excavation to summer camp visitors.

Elders are exchanging ideas about the provenience of the wood. Could it be driftwood picked up on the beaches, or wood carried by boat or dog team from the tree-line?





Inukjuak have a rich archaeological heritage. Opposing page : artefacts are lying on the surface (left picture: Chris Amgiyou and Annie Kokiapik; right picture: Branda Epoo and Rhoda Kokiapik) . This page: Palaeoeskimo and Inuit structures are numerous. Archaeologists are carefully recording material culture.



Lucy Weetaluktuk says that her son, Daniel Weetaluktuk (the first Inuk archaeologist), used to tell her that it is important not to disturb archaeological sites in order to permit archaeologists to document the past.



A day to present
the preliminary results of our research to
the people of Inukjuak