The Avataq 1988 Archaeological Field School

Presented to:
Ilivvik Inc.

By :
Avataq Cultural Institute

December, 1990

Table of Contents

Figures

Appendices

Acknowledgments

We wish to express our gratitude to Mark Annanack of Kangiqsualujjuaq for his assistance in arranging field logistics, accommodations in the village and his many other services to the project. Our thanks as well to Paul Lepage of the Makivik Corporation who, through the co-operation of the Kativik School Board, arranged for the use of KSB houses by the field crew during its stay in Kuujjuaq. Special thanks are due to Alan York of Kuujjuaq for transportation of the project personnel and equipment in the village. Too, our appreciation to the crew of the C.C.G.S. Norman McLeod Rogers, for delivery of project equipment and supplies to the settlement of Taqpangayuk, and to the Keelan, Jararuse and Snowball families from Killinek who, then residing at Taqpangayuk, provided us overnight accommodations.

The field work was financed by funds apportioned from ministere des Affaires culturelles du Québec allocations to Avataq for archaeology and by a training grant from Ilivvik Inc. The Ilivvik grant was dispensed in the form of salaries for the Inuit students. The Japanese archaeological team collaborating in research at Nunaingok, sponsored by the Ministry of Education of Japan, assumed a portion of overall field logistics expenditures.

The Avataq Cultural Institute gratefully acknowledges the contributions of the above individuals and agencies to the 1988 Nunaingok archaeological field school project.

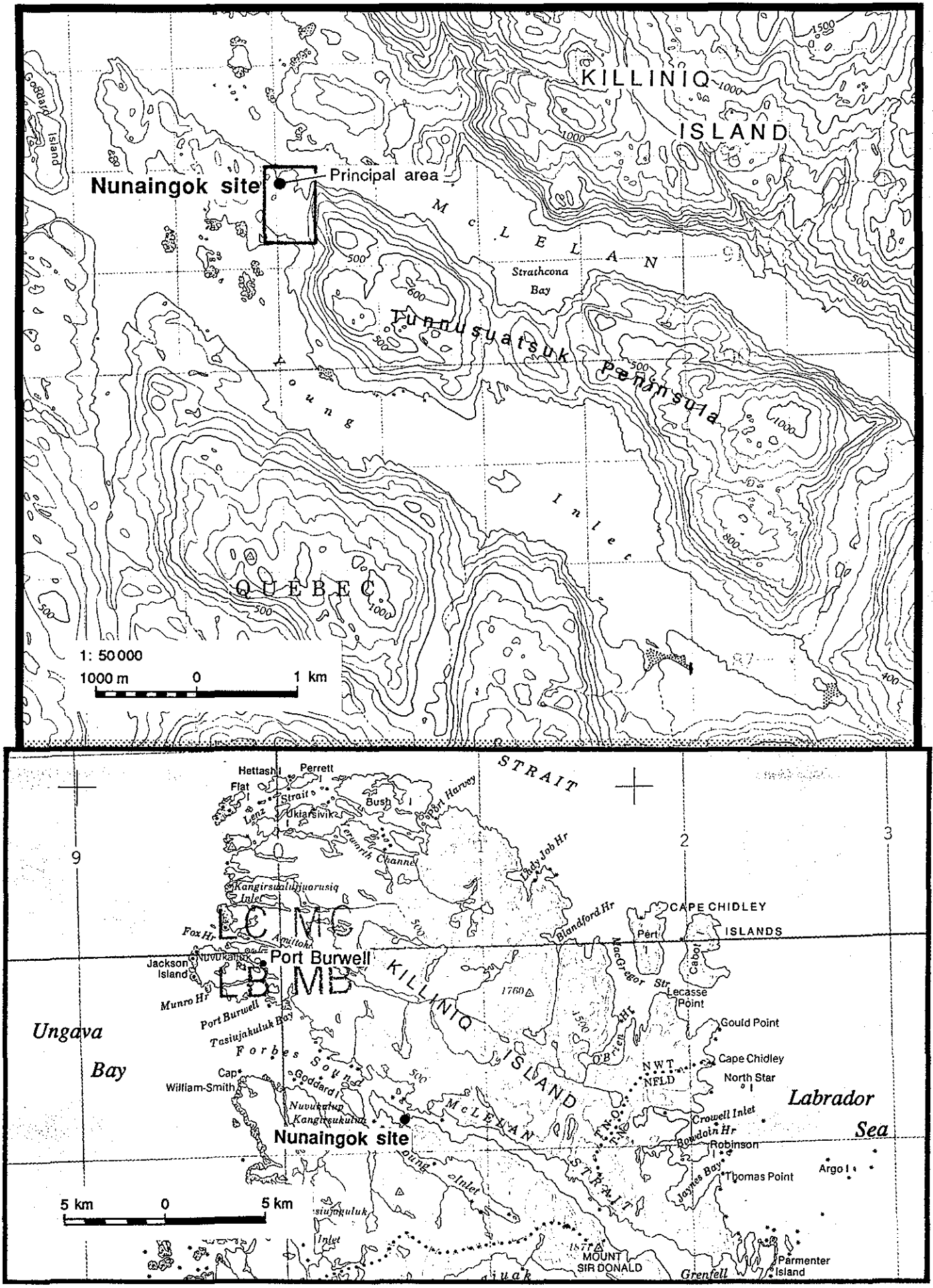
1.0 Introduction

The present report concerns the archaeological field school for Inuit conducted in 1988 by the Avataq Cultural Institute at the Nunaingok site. This exercise represents the second year of field school activities undertaken at the site. As in 1987 the course focused on the advanced instruction of Inuit students in field procedures in a long-term research project involving the collaboration of a visiting Japanese archaeological team.

The Nunaingok site is located on the northeasternmost extremity of the Quebec-Labrador Peninsula, at [redacted] (Figure 1). It is situated on the west-central portion of the Tunnusuatsuk Peninsula, opposite Killinek Island. The site, covering approximately 1 km^2, encompasses a number of archaeological localities composed, variously, of concentrations of habitation structures, scattered burial vaults and other cultural features. As in the previous year the 1988 field school was implemented in the principal occupation area, comprising 16 semi-subterranean dwellings and sod qarmat clustered on a small cove on McLelan Strait (Figure 2). This area is also characterized by large, well-developed refuse middens associated with the habitations, extensive prehistoric cultural deposits and, due to permafrost conditions, an abundance of well-preserved faunal remains and prehistoric and historic implements in organic materials. As presently understood, the principal area was continuously occupied by Palaeoeskimo and Neoeskimo groups over some 3500 years, extending from initial Pre-Dorset colonization of the site sometime around the middle of the second millenium B.C. into the mid-20th century. As such, it contains the longest uninterruped and most complete archaeological record of Inuit occupation currently known at any single locality in Nunavik.

The 1988 field school was carried out over a period of 5 weeks, from 16 July through 21 August. Return transportation to the site from Kangiqsualujjuaq was by charter of the "Iniqunnaq", the municipality's longliner. During the training exercise the field crew subsisted on country food amply harvested by the Inuit hunters hired by the project.

Figure 1. Location of the Nunaingok site (JcDe-1), Nunavik



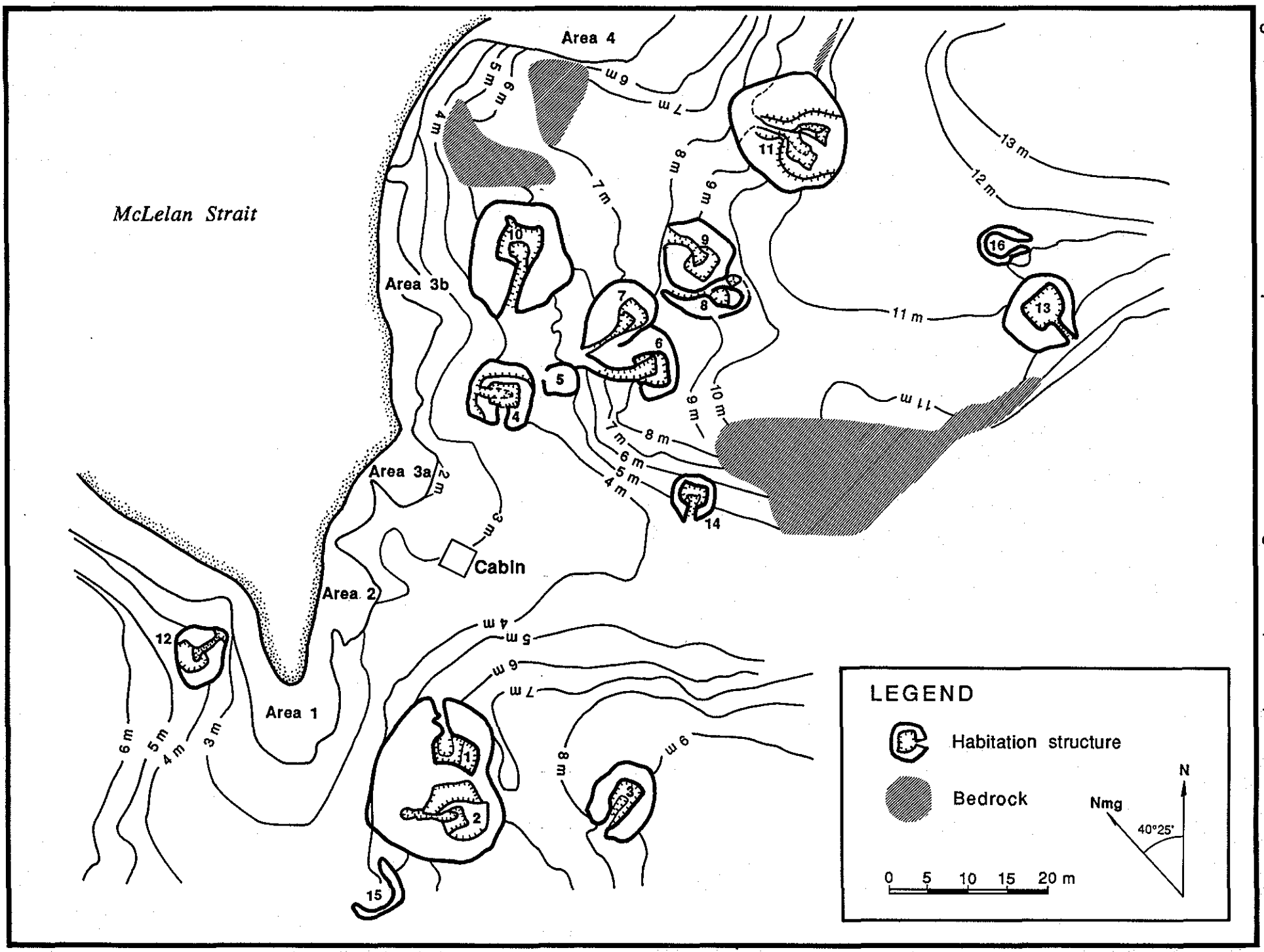


Figure 2. Plan of the Principal Area of the Nunaingok site (JcDe-1)

2.0 Description of the Field School

2.1 Orientations and Objectives

The Avataq programme for the training of Inuit in archaeology was initiated in 1985 in response to the archaeological concerns and requirements of the Inuit of Nunavik. The programme, a first priority of the Institute, has been organized so as to expose Inuit to archaeology as a study as well as a technique, to encourage the formation of Inuit archaeologists and to enhance awareness in the local communities of the cultural heritage importance of archaeological resources. It involves, basically, progressive levels of field school training followed by instruction in laboratory procedures.

Accordingly, the 1988 Nunaingok field school focused on the training of advanced Inuit students in diverse techniques appropriate to the controlled recovery and registration of archaeological data occuring in complicated structural and stratigraphic associations. It also stressed a variety of approaches for data collection, the evaluation of data significance and the importance of preliminary interpretations to the planning and execution of excavations in the field. The principal objective of the course was to promote the developement of Inuit archaeologists of professional competence for the research and management of archaeological resources. The eventual implementation of community-based and community-oriented projects in archaeology is explicit to this objective.

The training activities centered on instruction in the following:

-site mapping and gridding using a theodolite;
-different procedures for the controlled excavation of habitation structures and complex cultural deposits;
-recognition of the inter-relationships between stratigraphic horizons and occupation components;
-techniques for the "intact" recovery and temporary conservation in the field of items in organic materials and samples for specialized analysis;
-systematic surface-collecting in disturbed zones;
- data registration and site photography.

2.2 Personnel

The field school crew included 5 Inuit students from 4 communities: Tommy Weetaluktuk and Noah Naktairaluk from Inukjuak, Bobby Grey from Kangirsuk, Pasha Keelan of the Killinek community, amd Johnny Annanack from Kangiqsualujjuaq . These students had participated in earlier field schools and other archaeological projects conducted by Avataq and, combined, had accumulated a total of 80 weeks of field experience prior to the Nunaingok course. Each had also expressed a desire for further training in archaeology as a vocation.Training activites were supervised by the resident archaeologist of Avataq, designated as director of the international research project, the assistant director of the Institute's Archaeology Department, and a third archaeologist hired as crew supervisor (Appendix 1).

The Japanese team collaborating in research at Nunaingok was composed of 5 archaeologists from various universities in Japan. This team was co-directed by Mr. Henry Stewart, of Mejiro Gakuen Women's College, and Mr. Kiyoshi Yamaura, of Rikkyo University.

The Inuit support staff consisted of 3 hunters and 3 cooks. Two of these individuals were from Kangiqsualujjuaq (i.e., the Etok family) and the other 4 from the Killinek community (i.e., the Jararuse and Annatak families).

2.3 Activities.

Excavation techniques were organized so as to provide the students a maximum of practical experience in diverse field methods appropriate to a variety of situations. For example, modified historical archaeological methods involving the definition of "operations" and "sub-operations" based on identifiable cultural features were retained as excavation units for the completion of work begun in 1987 in the Structure 1 qarmat and an associated refuse midden. Alternately, cartesian quadrants were employed for the excavation of Structure 14, a small semi-subterranean dwelling. These quadrants were oriented in correspondence with the architectural features of the habitation, dividing the structure into 4 sections of equal proportions. A standard grid system composed of intersecting 1-metre bands was applied to the excavation of inter-structural zones on the 3m

terrace and to the sampling of Structure 15, a semi-subterranean dwelling interpreted earlier as a sod borrow pit. The excavation units and the grid system were installed using a Sokkisha theodolite and 60-metre surveyor's chains.

In all, 126m^2 were excavated by the field school crew, incorporating 63.5 m^2 in the interior of Structure 1 and the midden, a 1 x 15m trench bisecting this habitation, 36m^2 on the terrace, 9m^2 in Structure 14, and 2.5m in Structure 15 (c.f, Appendix 2). The main stratigraphic profiles in the excavation units were recorded at a scale of 1:10. These profiles, totalling 83m in combined length, vary from 20cm to approximately 1.80m in depth.

The excavations were supplemented by intensive surface-collecting, carried out in Areas 2, 3A, 3B and 4 along the eroding embankment of the site. The intervening zones on the shoreline were also briefly inspected.

The stratigraphies, cultural features, "in situ" artifacts and other occupational elements, such as bone and baleen concentrations, revealed in the excavations were photographed in colour and black and white prints and in slides. The site in general and all habitation structures were similarly photographed. This work resulted in the identification of Structure 16, a previously unrecorded semi-subterranean dwelling.

Crew meetings were held at regular intervals for review of student field notes and discussion of research orientations, procedures and the interpretation of the cultural chronology of the site. Informal sessions were also held as required in order to solve problems in methodology and to inform the students of specific details observed in the excavations.

Activities carried out by the Japanese team included the completion of 1987 excavations in Structure 3, the excavation of Structure 12 and test-pitting in the vicinity of Structures 4 and 10. This team also participated in the crew meetings and many of the information sessions.

3.0 Archaeological Results

Occupation Sequence

The field school excavations yielded a considerable amount of original research data concerning prehistoric and historic Inuit cultural adaptations and the sequence of occupation in various portions of the Nunaingok site. The longest and most complete sequence recorded occurs in Structure 1 and the adjacent midden, the earliest confirmed occupation of which pertains to the Dorset culture. This Palaeoeskimo manifestation, generally dated to 800 B.C.-A.D. 1200, is defined in this area by relatively, thin discontinous humus layers overlying sterile soil horizons. Besides suggested relationships with Dorset cultural deposits situated on the 3m terrace, little other information is currently availiable for the early occupation of these parts of the site.

The area was next occupied by groups of the Neoeskimo Thule culture, presumed to have arrived in the region during the 15th or 16th century. These late prehistoric components are characterized by a complexity of stratigraphic levels associated with a buried semi-subterranean dwelling underlying Structure 1 and, in the midden, with an extensive hearth area. The stratigraphic profiles suggest a number of re-occupations of the zone by Thule groups.

The Structure 1 qarmat was subsequently built by historic Inuit directly over the Thule dwelling and cultural deposits in the midden. This habitation, composed of massive sod walls, was apparently constructed during the last half of the 19th century and appears to have remained in use on a seasonal basis into the 1920's. Several occupational phases are indicated, each of which was accompanied by architectural modifications and alterations to the interior features.

Structures 14 and 15 are historic Inuit and Thule in cultural affiliation respectively. However, both may represent earlier Dorset dwellings re-occupied by later groups. Excavations on the 3m terrace revealed extremely dense Dorset cultural deposits capped by a layer of sod containing historic Inuit debris.

Collections

The field school activities produced a total of 12,239 lithic artifacts, comprising roughly 10,840 waste flakes and about 1,400 tools. Dorset specimens are overwhelmingly predominant and include, among the tools, point, knife and scraper varieties, microblades, microblade cores, gravers, retouched and used flakes. An appreciable number of Thule lithic implements consisting mostly of knife and point fragments in polished slate was also recovered.

Some 124 organic implements related to the Thule and historic Inuit occupations of the site and more than 210 historical manufactured goods were also collected. The former, representing a wide variety of traditional cultural equipment, include points, shafts, wound pins, kayak and sled parts in wood, harpoon foreshafts and sockets, an ice pick, sled shoes and knife handles in bone and ivory, 2 shovels in caribou antler, a whale bone meat platter, a whale effigy in cut baleen, knotted baleen strands and a stitched sealskin bag.

The historical manufactured goods include empty cartridge cases, nails, glass bottle and ceramic dish fragments, numerous iron objects of undetermined function and a small quantity of trade beads. These items were recovered mainly from Structure 1, the, midden and Structure 14.

Faunal Remains

Slightly less than 7,000 animal bones, a large amount of baleen and a few remanents of preserved skin and fur were obtained from the excavations. Although analysis is pending, seal and caribou bones are clearly predominant, followed, in provisional order, by fox, dog and /or wolf, whale, bear, walrus, and migratory waterfowl. The greatest part of the faunal assemblage dates to the historic period. On the other hand, the bulk of the whale bones and all of the baleen are associated with the Thule components. Aside from decayed bone stains, faunal remains are lacking in the excavated Dorset culture deposits.

4.0 Training Development

For personal reasons, Johnny Annanack withdrew from the field school and returned to Kangiqsualujjuaq during the second week of the exercise. The other 4 Inuit students successfully completed the course. These individuals were instructed separately and as a group in the operation of a theodolite for site mapping and gridding, in data collecting and recording techniques, and in procedures for archaeological site photography. The students were also rotated through the various excavation areas so as to gain experience in research methods applicable to different situations and to acquire a fuller knowledge of the overall results of the excavations.

The students were initially allotted relatively simple excavation units and, with the acquisition of appropriate skills, each was assigned progressively more complicated units and greater responsibilities. This is the case, in particular, of Tommy Weetaluktuk and Noah Naktairaluk, who were delegated to independently carry out excavations in Structure 14. This work included the development of a research strategy, topographic contour mapping of the dwelling and its immediate surroundings, the delimitation of excavation units, registration of stratigraphic profiles and photography of the structure prior to and following excavation. Generally similar responsibilities were assigned to Pasha Keelan for excavations on the 3m terrace and to Bobby Grey, who excavated the western section of the Structure 1 trench. All 4 students participated in the excavation of the Structure 1 interior and the midden.

The field school was followed by the on-the-job training of 3 Inuit students in archaeological laboratory procedures at Avataq's Archaeology Department in Montreal. Tommy and Noah were hired on a full-time basis for this training in October,1988, and Bobby Grey at the beginning of January, 1989. The course, partially financed by a grant from Employment and Immigration Canada, extended to the end of March and focused primarily on instruction in:

-the processing and classification of artifact collections and faunal osteological remains;

-the preparation of artifact catalogues;

-the technical drafting of site maps, excavation plans and stratigraphic profiles.

Preliminary training in computer-aided drawing (CAD) and lettering and in word-processing for report production was also delievered. As well, classroom seminars in archaeological theory and methods and in Inuit culture-history were held on a regular basis.

5.0 Discussion

All of the primary objectives of the Nunaingok field school were achieved, both in terms of the archaeological work and the training activities planned for the course. Due largely to personal motivation, each of the successful students acquired proficiency in general and particular field techniques and a basic understanding of archaeological research strategies. These results also fulfill in certain measure the long range goals of the Avataq programme for the training of Inuit in archaeology.

The further training of the students continuing in the programme will emphasize the steady acquisition of more advanced skills necessary to the conduct of archaeological field work. The aspects to be stressed will be essentially methodological in character and will include instruction in the design of specific research projects, the assessment of site significance, the development of policies for archaeological resource management, and approaches to impact mitigation. Naturally, these concerns will be complemented as possible by training in the archaeology laboratory, to be centred on procedures for the analysis of artifact collections and the interpretation of site data.

Appendix 1. List of Field Personnel

Avataq Field School Crew

•Instructors

Ian Badgley, Director
Daniel Gendron, Assistant Director
Madeleine Belanger, Field Supervisor

•Students

Tommy Weetaluktuk	Inukjuak
Noah Naktairaluk	Inukjuak
Bobby Grey	Kangirsuk
Pasha Keelan	Killinek community
Johnny Annanack	Kangiqsualujjuaq

Japanese Research Crew

Henry Stewart, Mejiro Gakuen Women's College, Co-director
Kiyoshi Yamaura, Rikkyo University, Co-director
Tetsuya Amano, Hokkaido University
Isao Usuki, University of Tsukuba
Kaoru Tezuka, Waseda University
Naomi Kameda, Waseda University
Yoshito Hanami, graduate of Hosei University

Inuit Support Staff

•Hunters

Paul Jararuse	Killinek community
Johnny Annatak	Killinek community
Lucassie-Billy Etok	Kangiqsualujjuaq

•Cooks

Susie Jararuse	Killinek community
Kitty Annatak	Killinek community
Mary Etok	Kangiqsualujjuaq