Four thousand years. That is the time which has passed since a founding people of Canada have occupied the Arctic lands and waters. The Thule are the ancestors of today’s Canadian Inuit and living from the land is a long tradition for these people and the current day Inuit. With the arrival of European explorers, whalers, traders and, finally, settlers, the lives of the Inuit changed dramatically and they have struggled to hang onto their culture and their way of life and control their destiny ever since. And, despite the long time during which the Inuit have been here relative to others, to a large majority of Canadians, the Arctic, the Inuit and their way of life remains a mystery.

In 1971, the Inuit of Canada came together as a political body with the creation of the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada. Now called the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (since 2000), which means “the Inuit are united in Canada,” this organization has been deeply involved in achieving changes to government policy, with the objective of putting control back into the hands of Inuit communities. ITK has also played a key role in ensuring Aboriginal rights are embodied in the Canadian Constitution, and it has participated in the four key Inuit land claims negotiations for Nunavut (1993), the Inuvialuit (1984), Nunavut (1993) and Labrador (2004).

Given its nearly forty year history of championing Inuit rights and recognition, it should be no surprise that ITK has now spearheaded the declaration of 2010 as the Year of the Inuit. The purpose of this initiative is to draw attention to Inuit culture, as well as issues and challenges facing Inuit in Canada. Issues like the shortage of suitable housing, low incomes levels and lack of economic development, the development of regional economies, and initiatives in education and training. Visit www.nunavutminingsymposium.com

Canadian North offers special convention rates for the symposium. Visit their website at www.canadiannorth.com, under Sales & Fares to take advantage of this reduced rate.

**Community Events:**

**Nunavut Mining Symposium: April 13-15**

The 2010 Nunavut Mining Symposium is geared towards professionals from various levels of government, exploration and mining companies, regulatory agencies and Inuit organizations.

**Community Celebrations:**

Toonik Tyme: April 7-12

The 45th annual Toonik Tyme Festival celebrates the beginning of spring by holding a week of events that includes outdoor games, live music, feasts and competitions like igloo building, seal hunting and snowmobile races. The festival was started by the community in 1964 to attract tourists. It’s a great opportunity to get out and get active after a long, cold winter and to celebrate traditional activities and life in the Arctic. Visit www.tooniktyme.com

Alianait Arts Festival: June 21–July 1

This year’s theme is “Cultural Fusions” and will showcase art, music, film, storytelling, circus arts, dance and theatre by local, Canadian and international performers. The festival lasts ten days, kicking off on Aboriginal Day and wrapping up on Canada Day. Visit www.alianait.ca

Canadian North is a proud sponsor of all these events.

### COMMUNITY PROFILE

#### Iqaluit

Iqaluit: Inuituk means “place of many fish”.

**Population:** Approx. 7,000

**Adventures:** In April, experience the Arctic from a qamutik (sled) behind an eager team of dogs, or set up a winter camp and watch the amazing aurora borealis.

**Food:** For the more adventurous palate, community feasts offer traditional fare such as raw and boiled caribou and seal, and raw, frozen char. You will see whole seals laid out on the floor, being butchered and consumed raw in the manner Inuit have done for centuries. You may encounter muktakaq, the outer layer of skin and blubber from whales (beluga and narwhal), served raw.

**Record High:** 25.8°C (2001)

**Record Low:** 45.6°C (1967)

**History:** Until 1987, Iqaluit was known as Frobisher Bay, a name chosen by the southerners who settled in the area. Original occupants of the area can trace their roots back to 2000 BC.

Iqaluit has been occupied almost continuously for the past 4,000 years by the Inuit and their ancestors. On April 1st of 1999, Iqaluit became the capital of the new Territory of Nunavut.

**Access:** The community is accessible by jet air service from Ottawa and Dash 8 service to and from smaller communities in the Qikiqtaaluk region with Canadian North.

### INTO THE ARCTIC

A week earlier we had left the wolves of Lake Hazen behind and flew 100 kilometres south to the Parks Canada camp at Tanquary Fiord. From the air we saw the route we had hiked while there. The enormity of Quttinirpaaq National Park, the size of Sweden, hit home as we realized how little ground we had actually covered.

Tanquary greeted us with beautiful weather as Carl and I hiked in our t-shirts for six hours to get a lay of the land. Around us were peaks and valleys, with the Ad Astra Ice Cap dominating the view to the north, draping the mountainside with its icy claws. So inviting to explore, and yet deceptive in its scale. A study of the map showed the glacier to be 12 kilometres away, with multiple river crossings. Far more than an afternoon hike. Finding a great view closer to camp, for all our strength, I finally turned in at 2:30 a.m. The never-ending days made it tough to get to bed at a reasonable time.

We filled our backpacks for a few days on the land as another film crew arrived to do a documentary about the park. Turns out that an artist painting here was a good element for their story. Along with park staff, we all crossed the McDonald River in pursuit of the Omega Lakes in the mountains.

Nine kilometres later, we stumbled upon a gorgeous half-frozen lake, hidden to the world. Here we separated from the others, and pitched our tent at the lake’s edge hoping the ice would cool down the warm breeze.

Past the lake, the ridges opened up to dramatic vistas overlooking Tanquary Fiord. To the right, Air Force and Rollrock Rovers joined in a massive system of river braids feeding into the bay. Like a brontosaurus’ back, the land rose in the foreground. Mountains lined the ocean inlet on each side, and water and ice mixed together in incredible mosaic of blues. And far in the distance, glacier-topped peaks set off a perfectly clear Arctic sky. My birds-eye view made for a spectacular place to set up my easel...

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**Mighty Rivers and Vistas**

With each step my feet were growing numb. Carl and I had been crossing the wide glacier-fed McDonald River on Ellesmere Island for almost an hour and were still uncertain about making it all the way. I had to admit, the couch back home was sounding pretty good. But there was only one way to finish this … focus and keep pushing.
An Inuvialuit Journey to the Smithsonian

Three grown men are running around the Smithsonian Institution looking for ancient beluga-hunting weapons. On finding each new one, they fail to avidly discussing its parts and its details of manufacture. They practice the motion of throwing it and conjecture how far it might go.

James Pokiak and Mervin Joe are Inuvialuit hunters. Pokiak runs a big-game guiding operation out of Tuktoyaktuk, NWT. Joe is a resource conservation officer at Parks Canada in Inuvik. The third man is Stephen Loing, curator at the Smithsonian’s Arctic Studies Center. The object of their intrigue is a spear thrower—a long, narrow board used to increase the speed and throwing distance of a hunting spear. Loring is locating spear throwers from across the Arctic collections for Pokiak and Joe; the hunters are caught up in the vision of their forefathers making ready for the hunt—waiting for the signal of the eldest hunter, paddling their kayaks in a line, and pitched camp next to the river, hoping the water level would drop as the sun lowered ever so slightly through the night.

Hours later, our worst fears were confirmed. The McDonald had dropped as the sun lowered ever so slightly through the night. As we broke camp to move further into the mountains, Carl and I stopped and looked up. Blue sky. It had been blue for two solid days, 24 hours a day, without a speck of cloud. And it had been a steady 20°C. The implications dawned on us. Sun. Heat. Melting glaciers. Rising rivers. If we don’t go back now, we won’t be able to get out of the river.

As we approached the Parks camp, the warmth of the sun felt beautiful back to the Parks camp, the warmth of the sun felt beautiful. With only an hour of easy hiking upstream of where we had begun. Here the shoreline was becoming a bluff; we’d have to finish this soon or not be able to get out of the river.

Now, with the biting cold water turning my feet red, I studied the far bank. It rose sharply from the water’s edge, not like what when we crossed the first time. Looking back to where we had camped the night before, I realized that our diagonal steps in search of passable water had taken us well over one kilometre upstream of where we had begun. Here the shoreline was becoming a bluff; we’d have to finish this soon or not be able to get out of the river.

Crossing the last remaining braids, our sandals touched the far shore with elation. Carl and I pulled ourselves up the loose gravel bank to safety, and sat down with utter relief to survey the river valley we had just traversed. With only an hour of easy hiking back to the Parks camp, the warmth of the sun felt beautiful once again.