



KAIOQLAQ

Nunavut Inuit Heritage Centre

Finding our way home

The Prevailing wind is the most reliable source of spatial orientation for Inuit travellers when navigating on land. The prevailing wind causes consistent shapes and patterns in the snowdrifts. Kalutoqaniq. When a blizzard or other weather conditions obscures landmarks or other features in the landscape, Kalutoqaniq forms a natural wayfinding system for the Inuit to travel for miles over the vast tundra. Subsequent winds erode kalutoqaniq into small ripples, - tumarinyiq and large sculpturings,- Kaiioqlaq.

Knowledge and culture grew from the land and will show us the way forward.

The survival of any organism depends on its ability to understand and adapt to its environment. Few human beings have managed this better than the indigenous peoples of the Arctic region. For thousands of years, they have mastered not only surviving in one of the harshest places in the world but also thriving despite scarce resources, freezing temperatures, extreme winds, snow, and ice as a foundation for their lives. Long nomads, the culture of the Inuit people in Nunavut have developed over centuries in the vast, treeless tundra landscapes. Intimate knowledge of the land and sea, advanced skills, values, and tradition were passed through generations by listening to and observing skilled elders.

The impact of colonisation with forced relocation, rupture of families, undermining of culture, practices and values have been devastating for the Inuit culture and created an intergenerational trauma in dire need of mending. Without action, the knowledge and extremely specialised skills of the Inuit people are fading. There is an urgent need to reconnect and engage with tradition cultural practices to ensure the continuity of Inuit culture; to give the youth a foundation from where they can navigate their identity and place in this world. The Nunavut Inuit Heritage Centre echoes this sentiment and offers a new narrative that seeks to reconnect the Inuit people to each other and their collective past. It forms a bridge between generations, between traditional ways and modern life to find a new path forward. Here, we can tell the stories passed through generations, provide a space for Inuit culture and identity to flourish, and shape a framework to discover a stronger sense of identity and belonging.

The Site

Defined by rolling hills of tundra, glaciers, mountains, wide seas, and rivers, the strikingly varied Nunavut landscape holds thousands of years of human history. The territorial capital Iqaluit lies at the innermost part of Frobisher Bay and is characterised by its striking location in the midst of vast stretches of arctic wilderness – endless views of rocky, treeless terrain for miles and miles. Bright, colourful structures and simple, functional buildings are spread out on the rugged terrain with no roads connecting Iqaluit to the rest of the world.

The site for the new Nunavut Inuit Heritage Centre sits at the northern edge of the city on an elevated rocky outcrop with uninterrupted views towards the town, Frobisher Bay, and the Sylvia Grinnell Territorial Park.

Architectural Concept

The outline and location of the building is determined by the topology of the landscape and the movement of the snow and the wind. With its subtle organic shape, the building follows the topographic curves, and distinct longitudinal features of the land, parallel to the prevailing north-western winds.

Partly subterranean, set into the gently sloping hillsides overlooking the town, the building is incised into the rocky slope with a large roof continuing the lines of the landscape and forming a shelter over the interior spaces. Covered in rock and turf, the roof continues the landscape, and creates a new natural public space and viewing platform from where visitors can overview Frobisher Bay and take in the almost infinite horizon of the land towards the west and southwest. The building is becoming one with the land. The space beneath the crust of the hill, is taking advantage of the highly protective rock, embracing the sensitive collections and exhibits, while the open slit is exploiting the daylight and generous view towards the south-west, for all the

different activities and gatherings taking place in the NIHC. The building is not unlike a Qarmaq, a semi-subterranean stone construction, embedded in a slope, using the natural protection of the solid rock, and the material that is available on site.

What the building takes away from the land, is returned as a new natural outdoor gathering space on the roof, that offers spectacular views, and ensures continuous movement across the land.

The Nunavut Inuit Heritage Centre is designed to accommodate several diverse activities; it is a dynamic learning and exhibition space as well as a gathering place for Inuit culture and heritage that forms an all-encompassing framework, partly inside and partly outside, in which culture and traditional knowledge will be celebrated and brought into the future.

To the southwest, the facade opens seamless toward the bay where a large outdoor area offers space for various activities, such as carving, skin preparation, kayak building, and tool making, an area for canvas tents in the summer and iglu building in winter. The berry picking areas of the site will be preserved, and different food preparation facilities as dry screens can be placed permanently or temporary on the site.