

National Historic Sites

Abstract

National Historic Sites and their associated artefacts are preserved to promote an appreciation of historic places, people, and events and their contribution to the Canadian identity. There are eleven national historic sites in Nunavut. The first designated historic sites in Nunavut recognized European activities. More recently, the national historic sites have been designated to recognize sites important in aboriginal history.

Parks Canada administers a program that recognizes places of national historic importance. These sites and their associated artefacts are preserved to promote an appreciation of historic places, people and events and their contribution to the Canadian identity. There are eleven national historic sites in Nunavut. Some are managed by the territorial government, others are managed locally. The first designated national historic sites in what is now Nunavut recognized European activities. However, more recently, national historic sites have been designated to recognize sites important in aboriginal history. Note that both status and names of the sites are subject to change.

Historic sites commemorating European activities include the Frobisher site, Beechey Island, and whaling stations on Kekerten and Blacklead Islands.

The **Frobisher Site** is on Kodlunarn Island in Frobisher Bay (close to Iqaluit). This tiny island has the remains of Martin Frobisher's habitation and the smelting plant he operated between 1576 and 1578.

Beechey Island, in Lancaster Sound, (close to Resolute), was an important stopping point of the 1845 expedition of Sir John Franklin in his quest for the Northwest Passage. This expedition is famous for its disappearance; it is unknown where Franklin's ships, the Terror and Erebus sank but their sinking is commemorated on O'Reilly Island, in Queen Maud Gulf close to King William Island

Kekerten Island Whaling Station, found within the Kekerten Historic Park, was a heavily-used whaling station during the 1850s and 1860s. Located in Cumberland Sound, 50 kilometres from Pangnirtung, the island was used for this purpose soon after it was charted by Scottish whaler, William Penny, in 1840. The whaling industry made great use of Inuit knowledge of whales, the local area, and methods of survival in the Arctic. A number of artefacts remain as part of the whaling station including the foundation of three storehouses built in 1857 by Scottish whalers, and large cast-iron pots used for rendering whale oil.

A prominent historic site commemorating Inuit activities is **Fall Caribou Crossing** on the Kazan River. Caribou have been essential to inland Inuit, providing them the necessities of daily life and the means to survive the long winter. When crossing the Kazan River at this place, the caribou were vulnerable to hunters in qajaqs (kayaks) who caught and lanced as many as possible. The Inuit cherished and cared for the land and crossing areas in accordance with traditional beliefs and practices to ensure the caribou returned each year during their southward migration. To inland Inuit, the caribou were the essence of life, and all parts of the animals were valuable for food, fuel, tools, clothing and shelter.

Arvia'juaq and Qikiqtaarjuk, found close to Arviat, are sites where, for centuries, Inuit returned each spring to camp and harvest the abundant marine resources. These gatherings also provided an opportunity to teach the young, celebrate life, and to affirm and renew Inuit society. Along with oral histories and traditional knowledge, archaeological sites such as these provide a cultural and historical foundation for future generations.

Other sites with prehistoric remains include **Bloody Falls** near Kugluktuk where hunting and fishing sites were discovered; the **Igloolik Island archaeological sites** which illustrate a sequence of 3000 years between 2000 BC and 1000 AD; **Inuksuk** at Enusko Point, where there is an Inuit complex of hundreds of stone landmarks; and **Port Refuge**, on Devon Island, which shows traces of prehistoric occupations and trade with Norse colonies.

Map Sources

National Historic Sites in Nunavut

Parks Canada. National Historic Sites of Canada, 1999.

References

Canada. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. 1993. Nunavut Land Claims Agreement. Catalogue No: R32-134/1993E. (<http://www.aic-inac.gc.ca/al/ldc/ccl/fagr/nuna/nla/nunav-eng.asp>)

Nunavut Implementation Commission. 1995. Footprints in New Snow: A comprehensive Report from the Nunavut Implementation Commission to the Department of Indian and Northern Development, Government of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated Concerning the Establishment of the Nunavut Government. Iqaluit, Northwest Territories. 263 pp.

Related Web sites (1999 – 2009)

Federal Government

Parks Canada Agency
http://www.pc.gc.ca/intro/bienvenue-welcome/index_e.asp

Inter-agency

New Parks North.
<http://www.newparksnorth.org/default.htm>

