

## Sinaasiurvik Gathering Place

Parks Canada would like to construct a gathering place in the Sinaasiurvik area on the Borden peninsula of Baffin Island, within Sirmilik National Park, either at what will be referred to as the main site, located within an archaeological site, or at what will be referred to as the east site (figure 1). This project aims at working with the community of Arctic Bay to address the need for a cabin to support safe travel in the area and to support other community activities, knowledge sharing, education, research, monitoring, site protection and visitor activities at the archaeological site. Community consultations have been taking place with Arctic Bay community members, Joint Inuit-Government Park Management Committee support has been provided for the project and a Parks Canada archaeologist has been providing advice.



Figure 1. The two possible gathering place sites at Sinaasiurvik; the main site (left) and the east site (right)

The gathering place, once completed, will contain a multi-use cabin, a cultural learning facility, outdoor sitting area, fire pit, privy and a flagpole. All the gathering place infrastructure and impacted area will not be greater than 480 m<sup>2</sup>.

The Sinaasiurvik area is close to the floe edge and has been an important area to Inuit, as well as Thule and Dorset cultures, for more than a millennium. The gathering place will be accessible in multiple ways:

- Main access to the site will be by snowmobile from April to June. This access will be almost entirely by the local Inuit community of Arctic Bay with occasional access by Parks Canada staff.
- The site will have a delineated helicopter landing zone. Helicopter use will be limited to Parks Canada operations and projects (including projects involving local Inuit) and used mainly in the summer. Visitor (non-Inuit) will not be allowed to access to the site by helicopter. Site access by helicopter will likely only occur 2 to 4 times per year.
- During ice free times the site can be accessed by boat (mid-July to September). Visitors (non-Inuit) will be accompanied by a trained local guide or Parks Canada staff. Access by boat will be limited to August and September.
- Access by boat is expected to be minimal (~1-5 trips per years)

The site will be used in multiple ways:

- The multi-use cabin, within the gathering place, will allow local Inuit, Nauttiqsuqtiit and Parks Canada staff to have a place of refuge from wildlife and poor weather conditions; this cabin will be complete with sleeping and cooking areas and will be able to accommodate multiple people and eliminate the need for camping or cooking outside when conditions are unfavorable.
- The gathering place will allow for Parks Canada and Nauttiqsuqtiit to have a base of operations to protect, monitor and interpret the cultural site and monitor activities that are taking place in the area (i.e., ship traffic, outfitters, area use).
- Inuit elders will be able to access the site safely and easily. This will allow the site to host gatherings where Inuit Elders can transfer knowledge to youth. The outdoor seating area and fire pit will provide a environment for the sharing of knowledge and the cultural learning facility will offer an area out of the elements to share knowledge when conditions are not favorable outside. The multi-purpose cabin will allow these events to take place more easily and last for a period of several days at a time. These are events that will be organized and facilitated by Parks Canada on a semi regular basis.
- The gathering place site will give the ability for Parks Canada to facilitate in-park meetings with the Sirmilik Joint Park Management Committee (SJPMC), Inuit Knowledge Working Group (IKWG) and gatherings of local groups that would like to conduct knowledge sharing. The meeting venue and outdoor seating area will create an area of comfort for these meetings to occur. It will increase these groups' connections with Sirmilik National Park and the park's connection with the Arctic Bay community.
- The design of the facility, being within the cultural site, will provide the ideal location for Inuit storytelling and presenting of Inuit culture to park visitors (non-Inuit). This is not an area that has had much visitation (non-Inuit) in the past, but with the gathering place infrastructure present, it will offer a unique opportunity for Parks Canada or Inuit outfitters to bring visitors to an important Inuit site and listen to knowledge and hear stories from local Inuit.
- Visitors (non-Inuit) to the site must be accompanied by a guide (Sirmilik National Park Management Plan) and a short training course will be offered to local Arctic Bay Inuit to become these guides. In this way, the site will have an economic benefit to local Inuit and create opportunities for visitors (non-Inuit) to access the site from Arctic Bay.
- The gathering place can also provide a base for future research, such as Inuit knowledge studies, that can be conducted in the area.
- Inuit Guardians doing patrols in the area of Sinaasiurvik can utilize the multi-use cabin to allow them to patrol the area more safely.

### **The Sinaasiurvik Gathering Place Project will have five phases**

**Phase 1:** Delivery of multi-use cabin to the Sinaasiurvik site.

The multi-use cabin is a prefabricated building that is in multiple sections and ready for assembly. The sections are in Arctic Bay. The building sections will be brought from Arctic Bay to Sinaasiurvik by snowmobile and qamutik in late May of 2023.

**Phase 2:** Assembling of the multi-use cabin.

In August of 2023, Parks Canada staff and Arctic Bay community members will go Sinaasiurvik, erect a temporary camp and assemble the multi-use cabin over a period of ten days. All work and impact will be contained to a zone delineated by an archeologist as suitable for the construction.

**Phase 3:** Delivery of cultural learning center, flagpole, outdoor sitting area, privy and above ground fire pit to the Sinaasiurvik site.

The cultural learning center, flagpole, outdoor sitting area, privy and above ground fire pit will be prefabricated and in multiple sections and ready for assembly. The sections will be stored in Arctic Bay. The delivery of the listed items to Sinaasiurvik will be done by snowmobile and qamutik and completed in late May of 2024, while it is possible to travel on the sea ice.

**Phase 4:** Assembling of cultural learning center and outdoor sitting area, erection of flagpole, privy and above ground fire pit.

In August of 2024, Parks Canada staff and Arctic Bay community members will go Sinaasiurvik, erect a temporary camp next to the multi-use cabin and over a period of ten days will assembled all the listed items. All work and impact will be contained to a zone delineated by an archeologist as suitable for the construction.

**Phase 5:** Ongoing use and maintenance.

The gathering place will be in used indefinitely. It will serve as a refuge from inclement weather and wildlife hazards, it will host gatherings where Inuit Elders can transfer knowledge to youth, and support Inuit Guardians on patrol. It may also facilitate Inuit storytelling and presenting Inuit culture to park visitors. Furthermore, the cabin will provide a reliable staging area for staff who are patrolling and/or conducting cultural resource and ecological integrity monitoring programs.

It is expected that use of the site will be mostly by the Arctic Bay community with occasional trips by Parks Canada. It is likely that use of the site will be low with most use occurring in the spring to support Arctic Bay community members traditional activities at the nearby floe edge. Parks Canada predicts that they will have approximately 1-4 site visits per year and that these visits will be mostly limited to 3-4 days in length. Maintenance will be conducted on the site at these times and will be limited to maintaining the existing infrastructure and ensuring that any impact on the site is monitored and limited.