



Puvirnituk River

**Archaeological Sites Survey
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**Prepared for : Nunavik Parks and Nunaturlik Landholding
Corporation of Kangiqsujuaq**

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1 Archaeological Sites



1.1 Acknowledgements

First of all, I would like to thank Nunavik Parks and the Nunaturlik Landholding Corporation of Kangiqsujuaq for their support in making this amazing expedition on the Puvirnituk River possible.

In addition to the mapping, the safety protocol and the evaluation of the tourism potential of the Puvirnituk River, this expedition also served to complete a survey of the archaeological sites found in the area. In order to accomplish this task we sought the help of Paulusie Novalinga, from Puvirnituk, as well as archaeologists Daniel Gendron and Pierre Desrosiers, from Avataq. As a result of this cooperation, many old campsites have been identified far inland, three of which had never been documented before.

Of course, the logistics of such an expedition can be very challenging and many adjustments were required along the way to ensure the success of the project. In this regard, I want to convey a very special thank you to Markusi Qisiiq and Brian Urquhart who were always present and willing to give a helping hand, even in the most adverse situations. This project would have been impossible without their commitment and dedication.

Sincerely,

Eric Leclair

1.2 Locations of Archaeological Sites



Many new sites have been identified far inland. Three of them have never been documented.

- | | | |
|---|---------------------------------|----------|
| 1 | Nuvulik Mountain Campsite. | New site |
| 2 | Kayak Support Campsite. | |
| 3 | Esker Campsite. | New site |
| 4 | Rock Outcrop Campsite. | New site |
| 5 | Recent and Traditional Inuksuk. | |
| 6 | Puvirnituq Lake Taalu. | |
| 7 | Puvirnituq Lake Campsites. | |

1.3 Description of Archaeological Sites



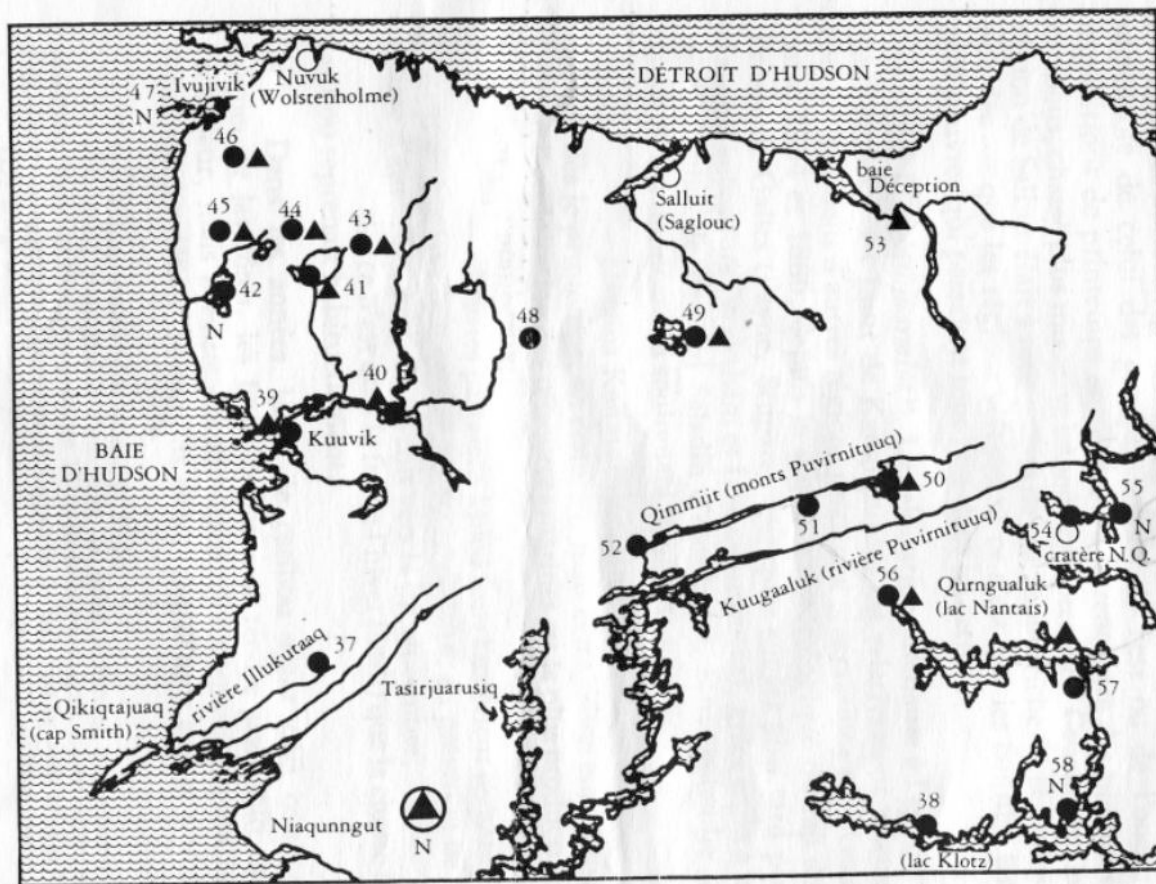
A detailed description and exact locations can be found below for each of those sites.

- 1.3.1 Nuvulik Mountain Campsite.
- 1.3.2 Kayak Support Campsite.
- 1.3.3 Esker Campsite.
- 1.3.4 Rock Outcrop Campsites.
- 1.3.5 Recent and Traditional Inuksuk.
- 1.3.6 Puvirnituq Lake Taalu.
- 1.3.7 Puvirnituq Lake Campsites.

1.3.1 Nuvulik Mountain Campsite

With some information from Avatak, confirmed by Paulusie Novalinga, and the help of the helicopter, we successfully identified an old campsite on the Nuvulik mountain (#50).

According to the elders that were interrogated in the 1970's, this area was a summer campsite for caribou hunting and also a meeting place for the Sallumiut and the Itivimiut (people from the Hudson's Bay)¹. The dot on Monique Vezinet map (#50) is 10 km wide, but with the help of the helicopter pilot, Markusi Qisiq and Noah Annahatak (as spotters) we found this amazing site.



Carte n° 4: De Qikiqtajuaq à Salluit

Monique Vézinet, *Les Nunamiut. Inuit au coeur des terres*. 1980, page 89.

Many tent rings have been identified at this site and some rocks suggest the presence of an old long house. There is also a very old and well preserved Inuksuk on top of the Nuvulik mountain. This sacred place is located 24 km away from the Pingualuit National Park and only 12 km away from the Puvirnituaq river. For canoeists who wish to see it, it's a 8 to 12 hour roundtrip hike from the river.

¹ Monique Vézinet, *Les Nunamiut. Inuit au coeur des terres*. 1980, page 88.

Many tent rings have been identified at this old summer camp for caribou hunting.



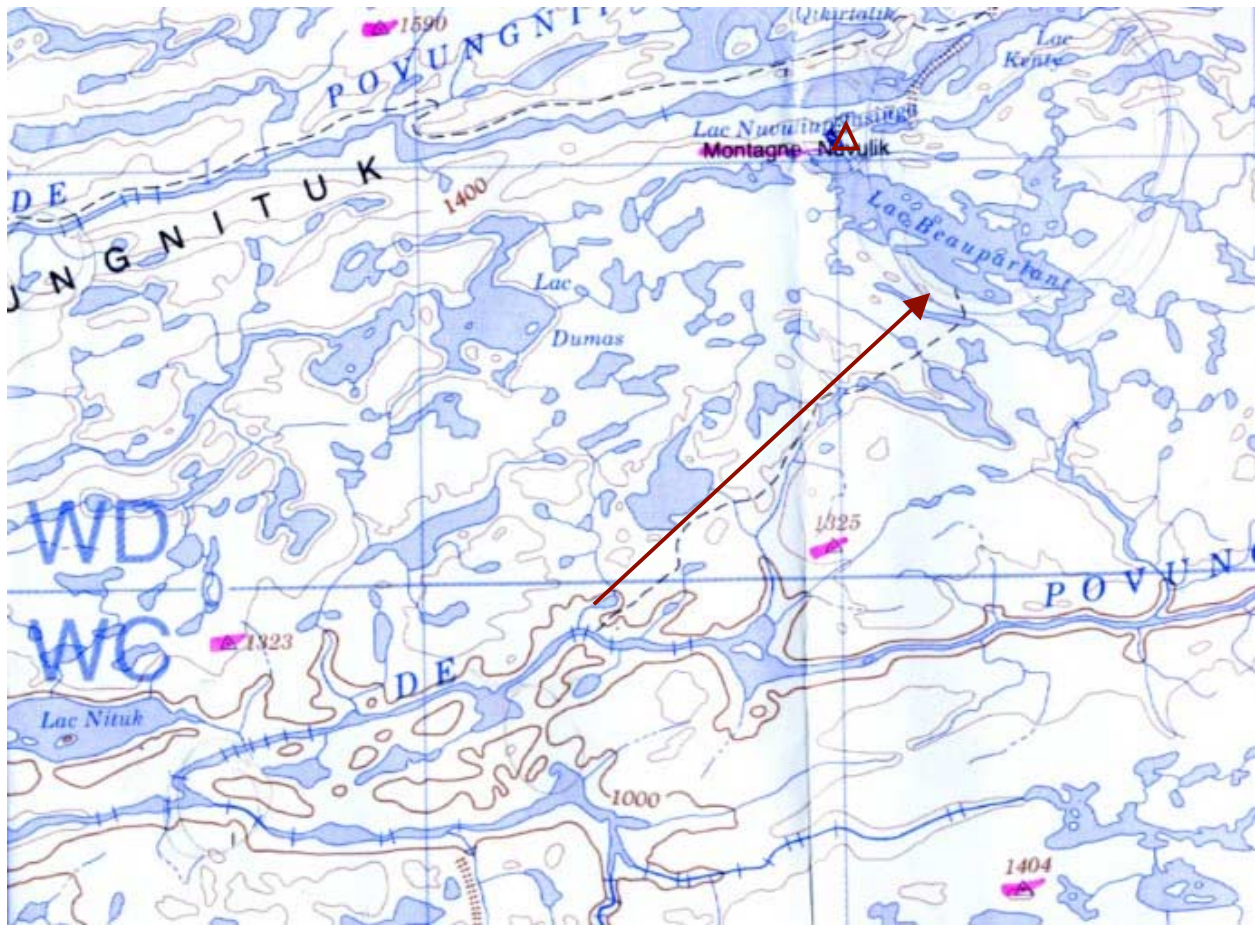
This first camping site is located 300 m South of the Nuvulik mountain summit, at UTM coordinates: 0520058 and 6810653.

The rocks below suggest the presence of an old long house, which is quite rare this far inland. This area likely has many more such interesting sites that have yet to be discovered.



This second campsite is located 600 m East of the Nuvulik mountain summit at UTM coordinates: 0520514 and 6811368.

The actual topographical map, published in 1983 (only a few years after the elders that were interrogated reported this place) still indicates a trail, from the Puvirnituk river, that leads straight to Beuparlant Lake, located at the foothills of the Nuvulik mountain.



This 13 km trail, although no longer visible today, was probably used by the Itivimiut (people from the Hudson Bay) to reach Nuvulik Mountain. There was no sign of recent activity (no empty drum of gas or anything else) in the vicinity.

In the 1880's, caribous became rare on the coast and Inuit had to travel far inland to hunt them. The large lakes of the Ungava plateau were ideal hunting areas, especially the lakes around the Pingualuit crater, as well as Nantais Lake (Quirngualuk) and Klotz lake (Nalluajuk).

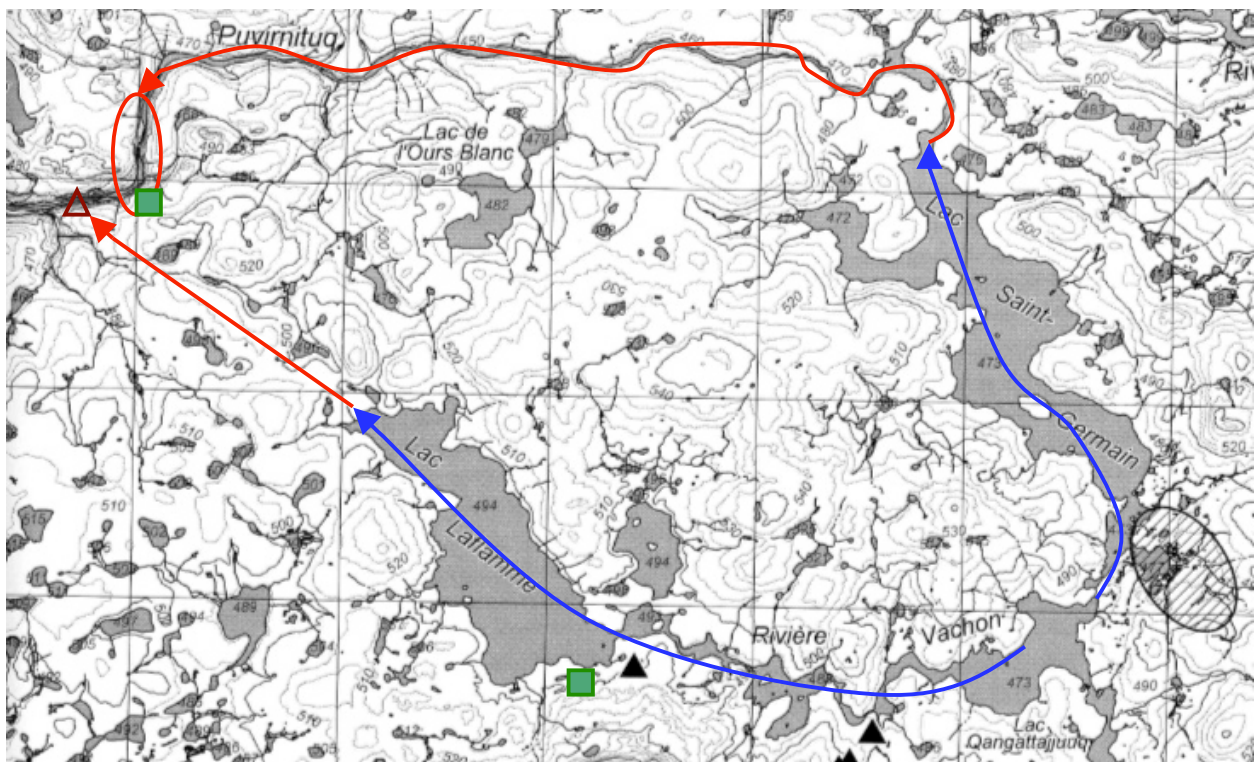
« Dans les années 1880, le caribou ayant déjà cessé de fréquenter les côtes, les Inuits devaient se rendre assez loin dans l'intérieur ... Il ne fait pas de doute, cependant, que le réseau de lacs, situé au-delà des hauts plateaux, constituait la zone des chasses les plus fructueuses. Il s'agit principalement des lacs entourant le cratère du Nouveau-Québec, de Quirngualuk (lac Nantais) et de Nalluajuk (lac Klotz).² »

² Monique Vézinet, *Les Nunamiut. Inuit au coeur des terres*. 1980, page 69-70.

Recent discovery of an old campsite and a kayak support also suggest that people from Kangirsuk and possibly Kangiqsuarmiut were travelling there in summer time for caribou hunting.



This campsite, perfectly nestled between the Vachon and the Puvirnituk Watershed, suggest that Inuits were portaging this 8 km plateau between Laflamme Lake and the Puvirnituk River to avoid travelling the shallow part of the upper Puvirnituk River (26 km) during summer time.

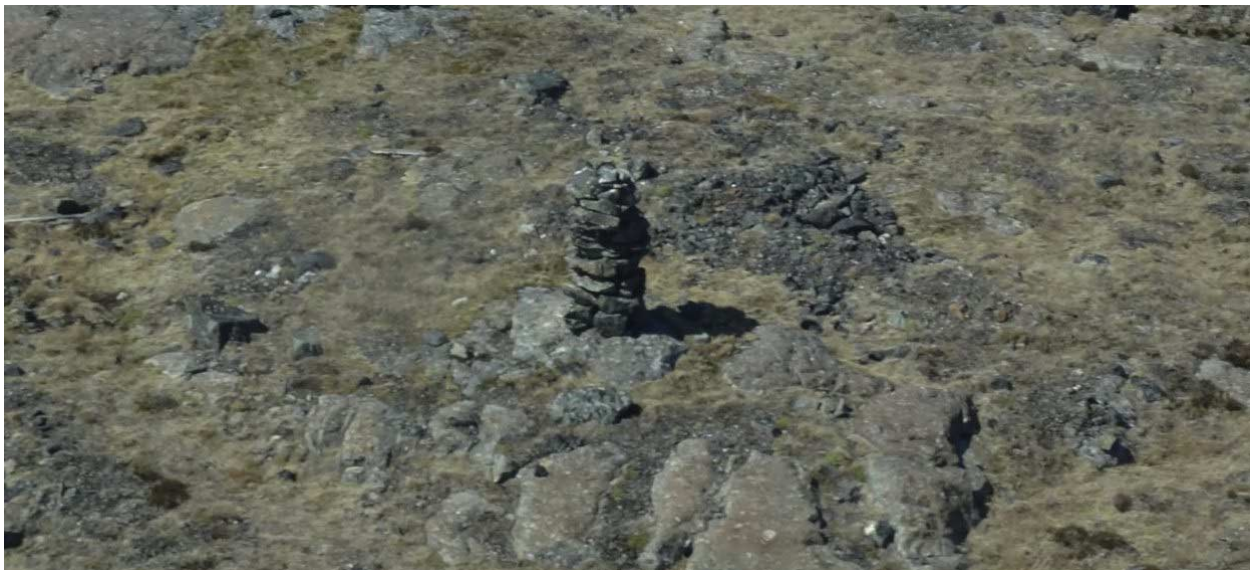


Apart from saving 10 km distance, this shortcut makes perfect sense, since it avoids a narrow gorge with big rapids (RIII+IV) and a long 25 km walk on an almost completely dry river bed.

Those two mountains in front, were likely easily recognizable good landmarks to reach Nuvulik Mountain for people coming down the Puvirnituk from the Vachon watershed. The actual trail that was used by the Itivimiut tucks around the right, between those two mountains, located 3 and 6 km away from the river.



There is also a very nice and old Inuksuk on top of the Nuvulik mountain. Overlooking Lake Beuparlant, this inuksuk can be seen from many km in the vicinity of the Nuvulik mountain.



This old Inuksuk is located on top of Nuvulik Mountain, at UTM coordinates: 0520055 and 6810919.

According to Paulusie Novalinga, this old campsite on the Nuvulik Mountain, which is located far North on high ground swept by constant winds, is right in the middle of a main calving ground area for the Leaf caribou herd.



Located halfway between many Inuit settlements, it's easy to understand why this site was also reported as an important meeting place. Not only was this area was an excellent hunting ground for caribou, but it is also the furthest point reachable by kayak in August and September, when summer hunts were taking place.

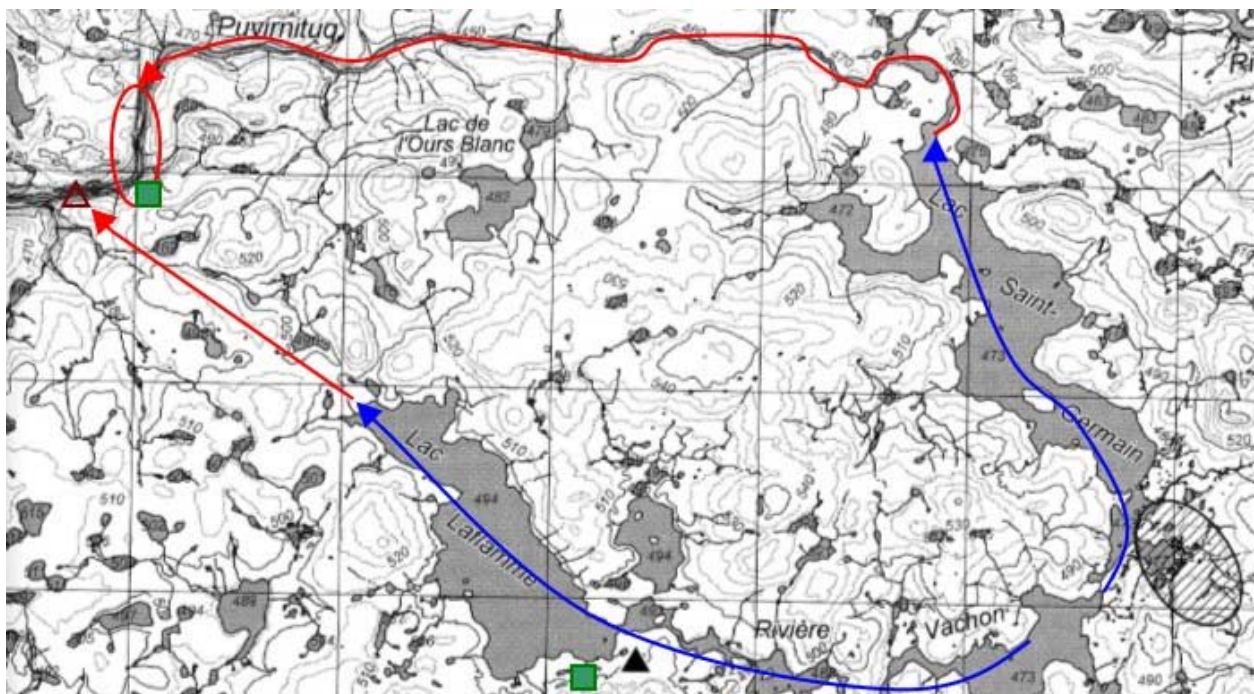
Coming from either the Puvirnituk or the Vachon Rivers, which are the two main natural ways of access to the high Ungava plateau area, this place is located at exactly the furthest end of the navigable waters in summer time.

1.3.2 Kayak Support Campsite

Recent finding of an old campsite and a kayak support suggest that people from Kangirsuk and possibly Kangiqsuarmiut, were travelling from the Vachon to the Puvirnituk watersheds.



This campsite, perfectly nestled between the Vachon and the Puvirnituk watersheds suggest that Inuits were portaging this 8 km plateau between Laflamme Lake and the Puvirnituk River to avoid travelling the shallow part of the upper Puvirnituk River (26 km) during summer time.



In addition to saving 10 km, this shortcut makes perfect sense, given that it avoids a narrow gorge with big rapids (RIII+IV) and a long 25 km walk on an almost completely dry river bed.

The presence of this kayak support at such a strategic location (UTM : 0558757 and 6809266) suggest that many Inuit were travelling far inland for caribou hunting or other purposes.



The development of a 5 mm thick lichen between the top two rocks of this kayak support suggests that it is quite old and that it has remained undisturbed (until recently) for many years.



The remnants of an old Inuksuk on the way down to the Puvirnituk River also suggest that people were travelling both ways on this route. The portage trail meets the Puvirnituk River where it is calm, right after a narrow gorge with big rapids (RIII+IV).



This Inuksuk was likely an excellent landmark on the way up to the Vachon watershed. UTM coordinates : 0435450 and 6708760.



The location of this kayak support shows how well Inuit knew this ground. Two modern expeditions, who travelled over those two watersheds in 1978 and 1985, equipped with topographical maps and all the outfit, chose to leave the river further West and ended up portaging 10 km rather than 8 km, not to mention the difficulty they must have had, travelling through a series of very shallow lakes West of the crater instead of using Laflamme Lake. All in all, both teams took 3 days to portage this section, instead of 1-2 days, had they chosen the easier way used traditionally by the Inuit.



From the Park's cabin overlooking the Puvirnituq valley, it is an easy walk (1.5 km) to visit this very interesting site which includes the kayak support, the nearby campsite and the old Inuksuk.



1.3.3 Esker Campsite

This campsite is located half way between the mouth of the Little Puvirnituk river (beginning of Allemand Lake) and the trail that leads to Nuvulik Mountain from the Puvirnituk River.



Located on top of an esker, this undocumented campsite includes a fox trap and six tent circles, two of which are very old (rocks are almost entirely covered with moss).

The two old structures are near the river at the bottom of the esker and the other ones are on top.



The diameter of the first old structure is 5 m. A smaller tent circle (2 m) is also present nearby.



The diameter of the second old structure is 4 m. The rocks of these two old structures are covered by moss 8 inches thick on all sides. Only separated by a few meters, the coordinates of those 2 old structures are UTM : 0482392 and 6791223.



All the structures here are very well preserved. Fire pits are clearly visible. Some rocks look like old entrances in some of them. Everything appears to have been completely untouched.



The rocks of the more recent structures are still covered by at least 4 inches of moss on all sides.

The remnants of a fox trap made of rocks can be found in the middle of the four recent structures that spread over 100 m on top of the esker. Near this fox trap is a small tent circle of 2 m.



The UTM coordinates of these more recent structures are : 0482052 and 6790993.

The diameter of the four tent circles located on top of the esker are respectively (from top to bottom) 3 m, 2 m (near the fox trap), 3m and 5 m. Below is a picture of the biggest one (5 m).



As usual, this site is extremely well located, in the middle of a caribou highway. We can see some across the small lake behind the esker and we ran into a crossing while leaving this site.



1.3.4 Rock Outcrop Campsites

Two old campsites have been identified near a unique rock outcrop. Those two campsites are located on both sides of the POV River, 15 km upstream of the northern end of Allemand Lake.



These campsites are just downstream of a 3 km set of big rapids (RIII-IV-V) and are located exactly at the northern limit of the shrub tundra, which means firewood!

At the northern extent of the flatwaters of Allemand Lake, plants are different here and there are also numerous birds in the bushes everywhere. See the 2-3 feet high bushes below!



We put our 8th campsite near the archaeological site North of the river. We found two very old tent circles there. Despite the fact that those rocks are almost entirely covered with moss, it is easy to establish they were moved by people since they are loose. UTM : 0471973 and 6787085.



Across the river, on the South side, a white Inuksuk indicates the presence of a very unique rock outcrop that we didn't see anywhere else. This type of rock likely had a specific purpose.



Rock outcrop UTM coordinates are : 0472267 and 6786653.

This Inuksuk looks undisturbed from a long time and there was no sign of recent trapping activity in the surroundings. Only a few meters away there is an old big tent circle (6 m).



Again, these two campsites are also located right in the middle of another caribou highway. We saw many caribou crossing on our short overnight stay there.



1.3.5 Recent and Traditional Inuksuk

Recent Trap Lines and Inuksuks can also be found as you travel down the Puvirnituk River. The northermost recent trap lines observed along this river extend as far as 150 km inland from POV.



The northermost cabin was found in the midle of Allemand Lake, 130 km inland from POV.



There are also some very nice traditional Inuksuk along the way. The nicest one is located on top of a mountain, where the Puvirnituk River drops 80 feet in a series of 5 magnificent falls.



The biggest Inuksuk is where the Puvirnituk River enters the Puvirnituk Lake, 30 km from POV.



1.3.6 Puvirnituk Lake Taalu

This campsite below is located where the river enters the lake, directly where there is a natural caribou crossing. See the « Taalu » across the river.



This very well positioned « Taalu », located at the furthest and narrowest end of Puvirnituk Lake was likely a good spot to see and hunt the caribou. UTM : 0391743 and 6662555.



1.3.7 Puvirnituk Lake Campsites

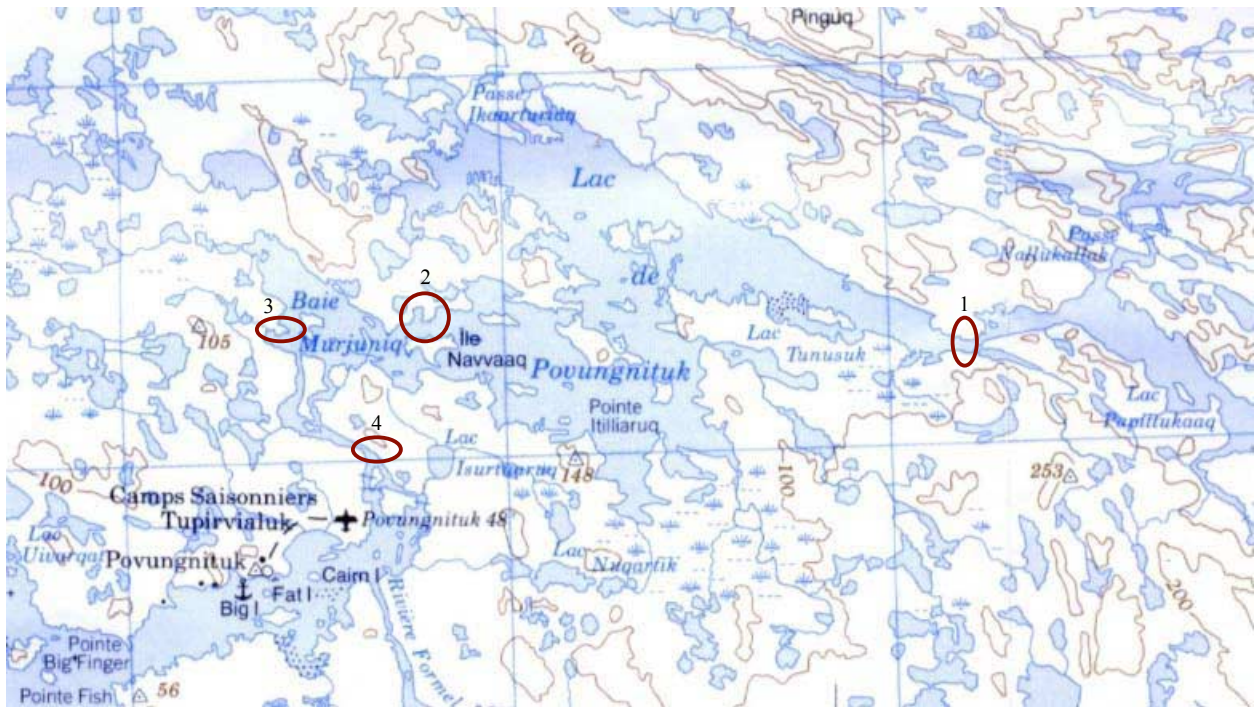
According to Joshua Novalinga , some campsites in the vicinity of Puvirnituk Lake are believed to be a few thousands years old. With the help of Paulusie Novalinga, we found 4 old campsites.



As you can see, from the thickness of the moss around the rocks, those tent circles are very old.



1.3.6 Locations of Puvirnituk Lake Old Sites



These old campsites are indicated on the river maps and here is their general locations :

- 1 Campsite and Taalu.
- 2 Campsite.
- 3 Campsite.
- 4 Campsite.

Here are the UTM coordinates for those campsites :

- 1a Campsite. UTM : 0392097 and 6662931.
- 1b Taalu. UTM : 0391743 and 6662555.
- 2 Campsite. UTM : 0378066 and 6663775.
- 3 Campsite.
- 4 Campsite.