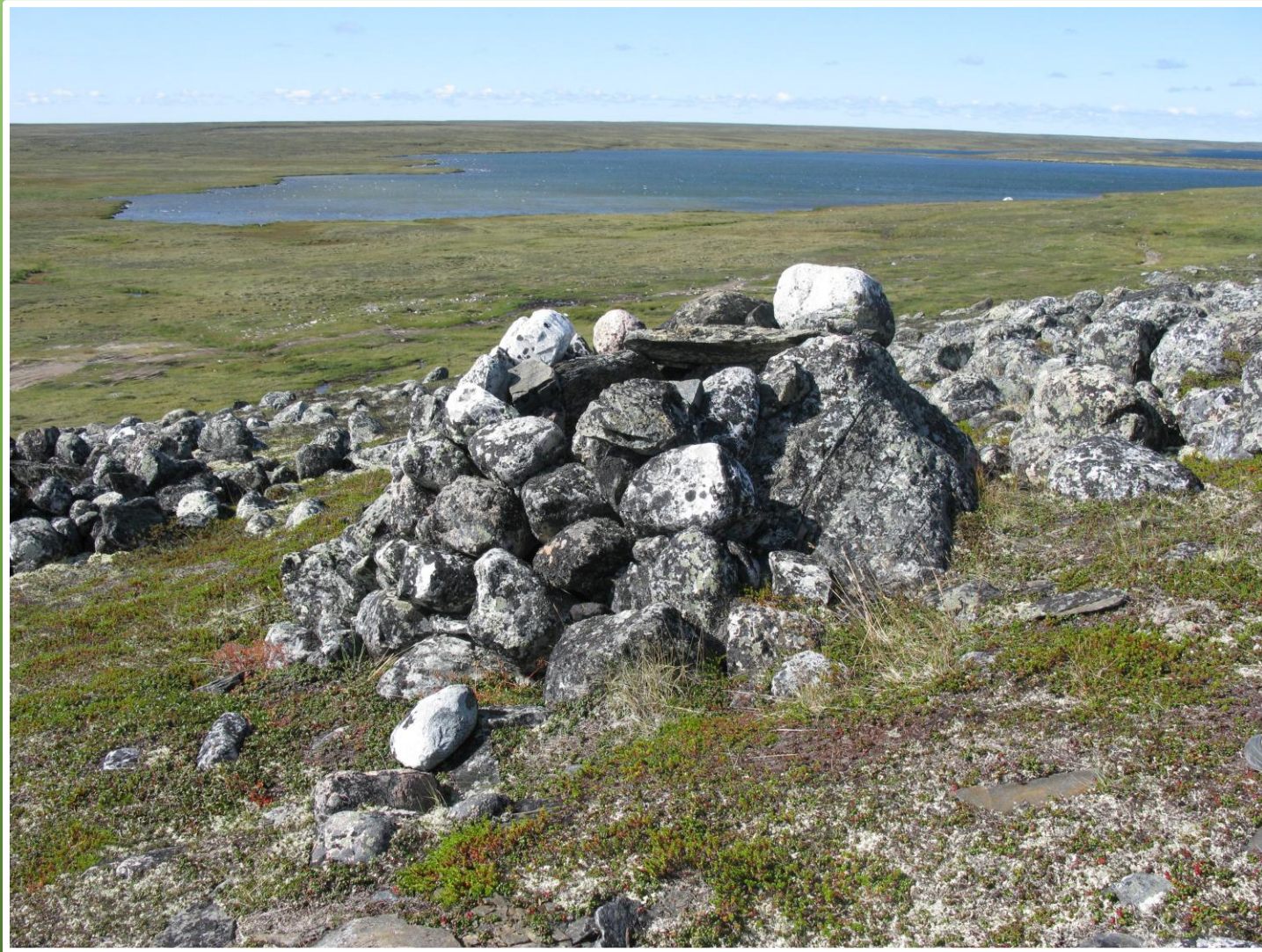


INUIT CULTURE, STRUCTURES AND TOOLS



Inuit Culture – Structures and Tools

- This presentation has been done to enhance the teaching program at Peterson's Point Lake Lodge.
- Point Lake has long been at the interface of different Indigenous groups
- Using the area over time:
 - **Dene** from around Great Bear Lake
 - **Tlicho** from around western Great Slave Lake
 - **Chipewyan** from east and south of Great Slave Lake
 - **Inuit groups** from the north, arctic coast
- People moved around to hunt/fish at different times, responding to population changes, seasonal variations and changes in prey populations.



Why focus on Inuit?

- Essentially, my own familiarity and knowledge.
- Some 40 summers at Bathurst Inlet and 25 years in Rankin Inlet, both in Nunavut.
- Have the most teaching material from this group.
- Tool replicas and clothing from both Bathurst Inlet and Rankin Inlet
- Photos from both areas, as well as other parts of Nunavut.
- The Dene culture is just as interesting but I'm less familiar with it.

Provenance of material...

- It is illegal to collect artifacts in Nunavut.
- However, Bathurst Inlet Lodge started in 1969, as a conversion of an old Hudson Bay Trading Post to a naturalist lodge.
- Lodge buildings are on *titled land*, very rare in the North.
- The buildings were repaired and repurposed, some moved to more stable sites, exposing trash piles and forgotten items.
- These were carefully collected, cleaned, and preserved for teaching, and used consistently over some 40 years.

- Some artifacts were accessioned into the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre in Yellowknife, and returned on permanent loan to Bathurst Inlet Lodge. These photos are only part of the collection at Bathurst.
- Other items, including clothing, were commissioned from local people and purchased by the Lodge.
- Local Inuit were gradually brought into ownership of Bathurst Inlet Lodge, starting in 1980, and proceeding through the years to now own majority interests in the Lodge, and, likely in the future, 100% ownership.
- Illustrations were done for a signage project for Iqalugaarjuup Nunanga Territorial Park near Rankin Inlet by the Outcrop team and are shared here for clarification.

- Clothing used in this demonstration was almost all found in the dump in Rankin Inlet (Inuit clothing used at Bathurst Inlet Lodge is stored there). There is no provenance for any of it. Most was found wet, and it has been stabilized, but not restored.
- One outfit was purchased after the 1994 First Keewatin Arts Festival by me, personally. (The label was lost when I loaned it out for a traditional dog race, so I've lost track of the artist.)
- A set of traditional tools was also bought at the Keewatin Arts Festival, made by Tony Manernaluk, who also helped with traditional knowledge studies for many years.
- A few items and structures were encountered during work in North Baffin Island for the Mary River Gold project. None were removed from the land and are included in the archaeological work done for that project.



Inuit migration into the Arctic. This timeline may be slightly out of date due to new work.

- More recent research (Max Friesen and Charles Arnold) indicates that the Thule migrations took longer than originally thought. Advance into the eastern arctic may have happened later than in Charles Arnold's earlier diagram. And it likely took some 200-300 years, as opposed to a few generations. (Blue arrow in previous slide.)
- The Thule encountered the Norse Vikings in western Greenland in 1364 (written records exist). Allows us to pin this event to a specific historical date.
- The Thule moved down the Labrador coast and into Hudson Bay during a cold period. Reduced access to large whales caused them to shift to smaller marine mammals, and to land-based prey.
- Eventually, the coming of "outsiders", including traders, caused huge shifts in lifestyles, and transition into modern Inuit groups like the Copper and Caribou Inuit.



Pre-Dorset tent ring, Mary River Project, Steensby Inlet, North Baffin Island. Also called the Arctic Small Tool Tradition people.



“Mid-passage” structure, people clustered around small cooking fires in winter.



Tiny quartz scrapers and cutting tools.
Pre-Dorset or Arctic Small Tool Tradition.
Bathurst Inlet area..

These people likely originated in Siberia,
and moved east across the Bering Land
Bridge into North America.

Quarter is for scale.



Exquisite tiny knife blade, likely Pre-Dorset, made of knapped chert. This would be set into a wooden handle and bound in with sinew.



Pre-Dorset points (Arctic Small Tool Tradition), found at Fishing Creek on Bathurst Inlet. Projectile points and small scraper. They remain on site.



Tool-making site

- Glacial erratic boulder
- Hammerstone
- “Spiled off” chunks that can be finished into tools.
- On Seal Cache Island in Bathurst Inlet, prime spring caribou hunting area. (Caribou swim from the large island in background across the Inlet at this point.)



Stone scraper, probably from a gneiss or granite boulder. Used to prepare skins for clothing.



Game drive system, row of inukhuit along a ridge in a clear migration route to a crossing place. Location of Pre-Dorset site with small tools. (“Inukhuit” = Inuinnaqtun; “Inuksuit” = Inuktitut.)



Closeup of the game drive system in previous slide. Photo taken from below.

Boulders are arranged along a gravel ridge. This system could be used to control caribou from either side.



What a caribou might see when approaching from below. Row of simple inukhuit at Fishing Creek.



Inukhuit (inuksuit) on a game drive system, Quadjuk Island..



George Haniliak Kapolak and inukhuk he built to indicate Inuit-owned land. Local people were hired to construct these on tracts of IOL. These are more elaborate than most functional inukhuit. These are done in an eastern arctic style.



Small stone hearth, used for cooking. These are found in the barrenlands and across the Arctic. A small fire (lichens, labrador tea, heather, and small twigs) is built in the centre and meat is cooked on a flat rock, metal grill, frying pan, or teapot balanced on the stones. Many are still used today.



A small hearth. Note dark smoke stain on boulder. Small piles of fuel are stored in foreground. Near Steensby Inlet, northern Baffin Island.



Tent ring, probably late Thule in origin, on a small island in Bathurst Inlet. Large stones, double ring of rocks. Probably spring use only, while caribou hunting.



Late Thule tent ring at Qamaviniqtaaluk, Rankin Inlet, at edge of a char-fishing river and where caribou can be hunted when crossing the river.

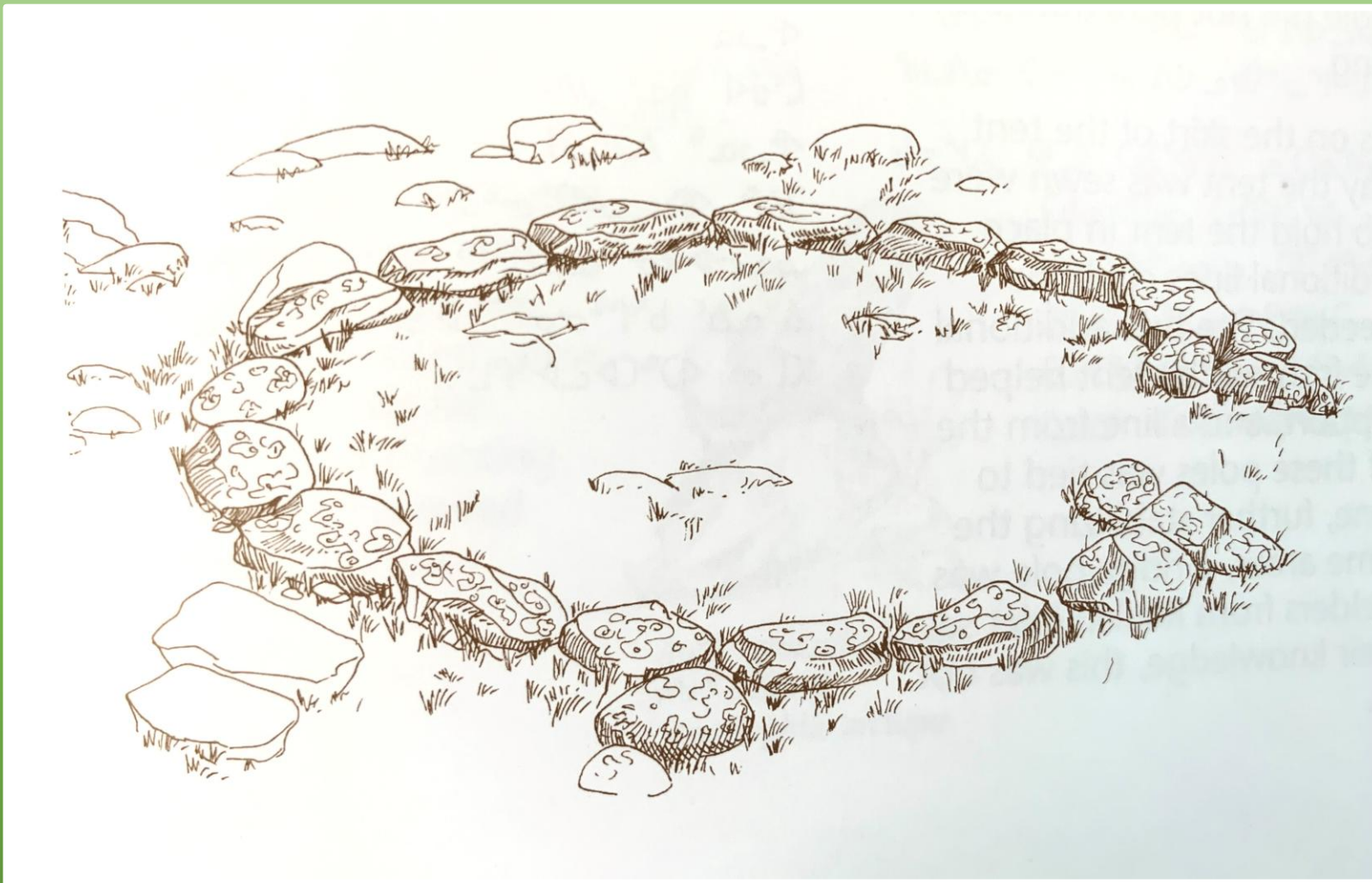
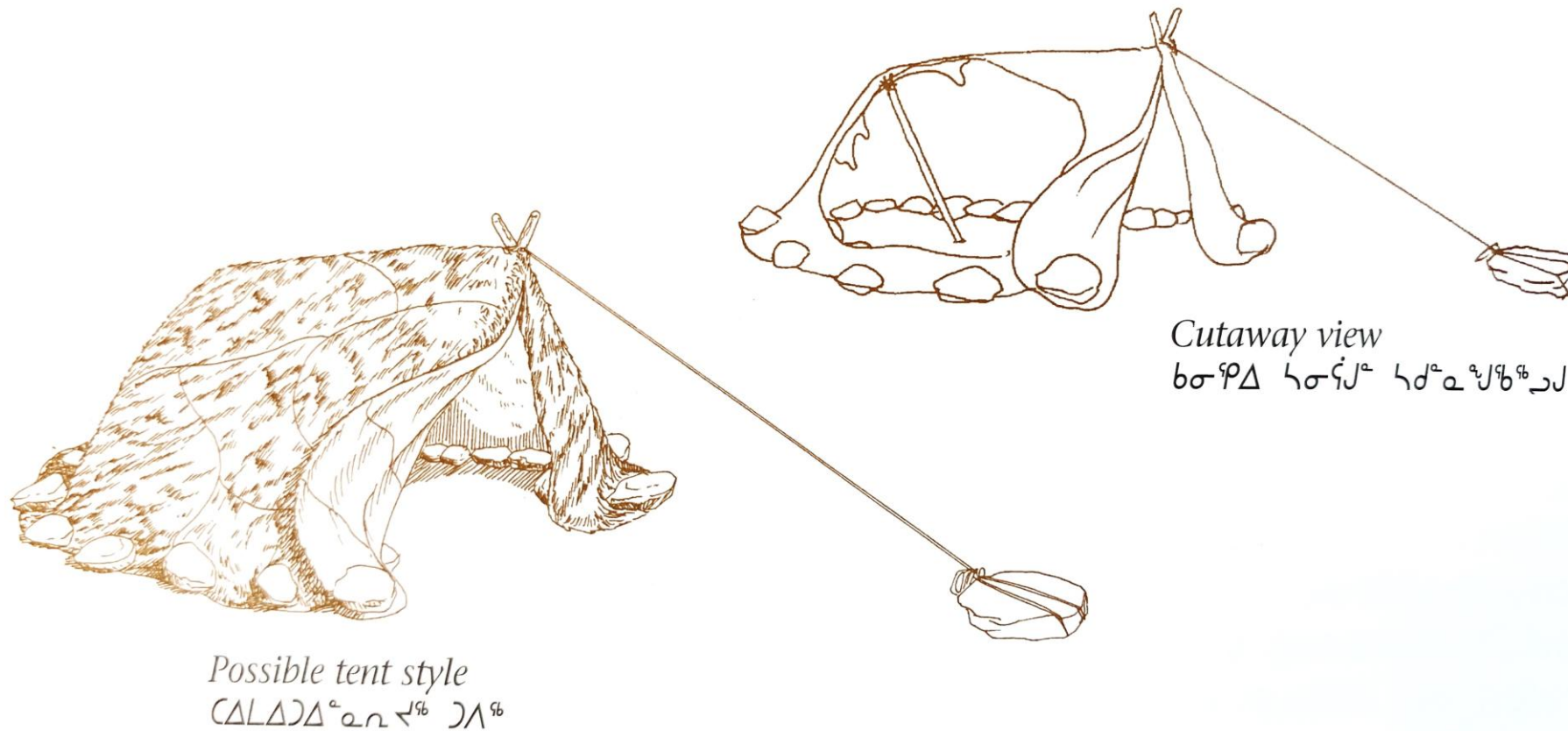


Diagram of a Caribou Inuit or very late Thule Inuit tent ring. Rocks are large, but there is only one ring. Extra rocks outside of the ring probably were used to hold stabilizing thongs to the top of the tent. Iqalugaarjuup Nunanga Territorial Park near Rankin Inlet. From Park guide for Nunavut Parks.



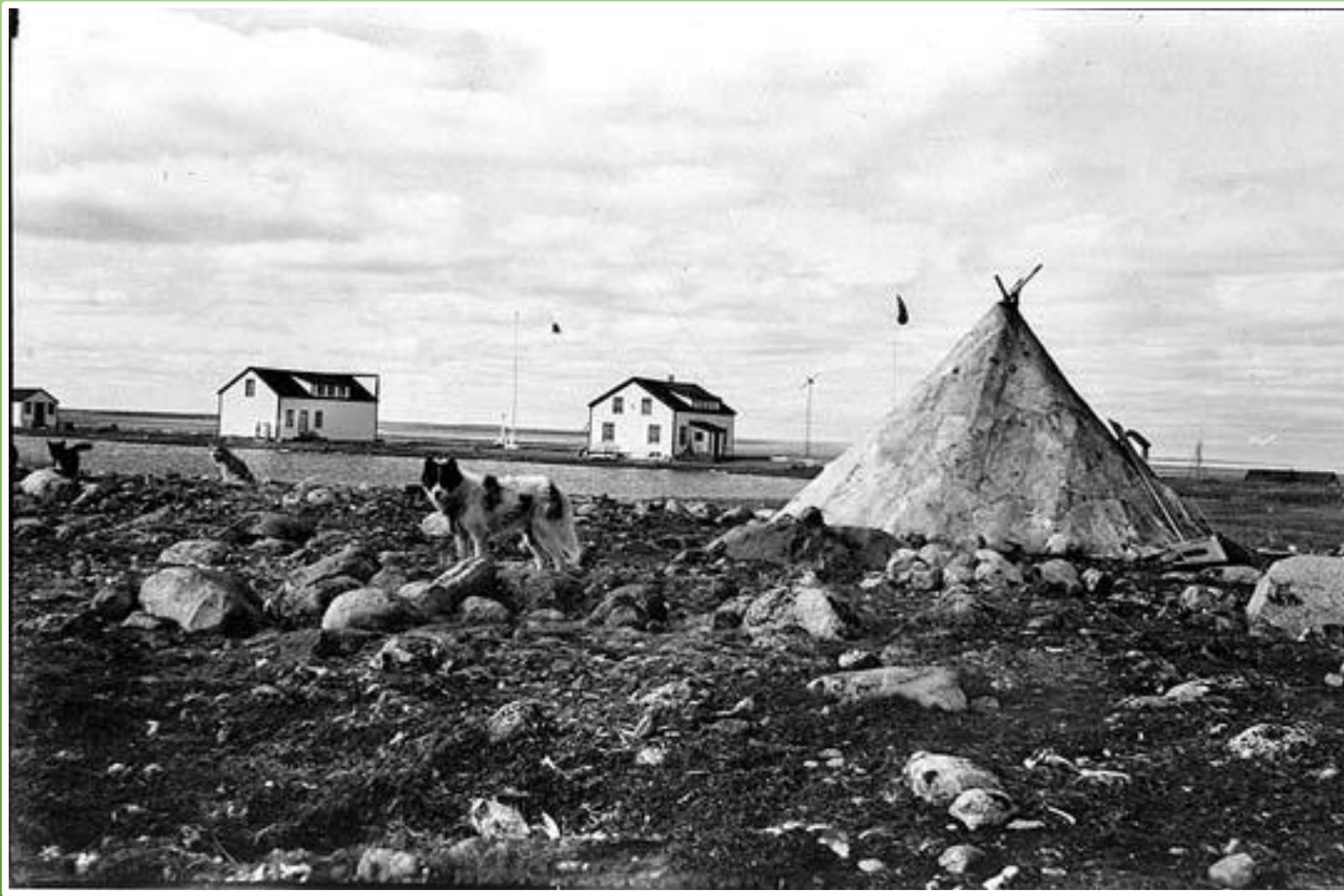
Often earlier tent rings were reconfigured for later use. This one is a smaller tent ring constructed using rocks from a previous larger ring..



Illustrations of a late Thule tent, note stones inside and outside the tent. The bottom of the tent was placed under the outer stones. Also, only two poles were used to support the entrance, and possibly one internal post at the back. The light area inside the tent shows where the hair was scraped off the caribou skin to allow light to enter.



Archival photo of a tent near Pond Inlet, likely ca. 1930s. Many tents in the Baffin were made of sealskin. This one appears to be caribou skin and possibly some canvas, well worn.



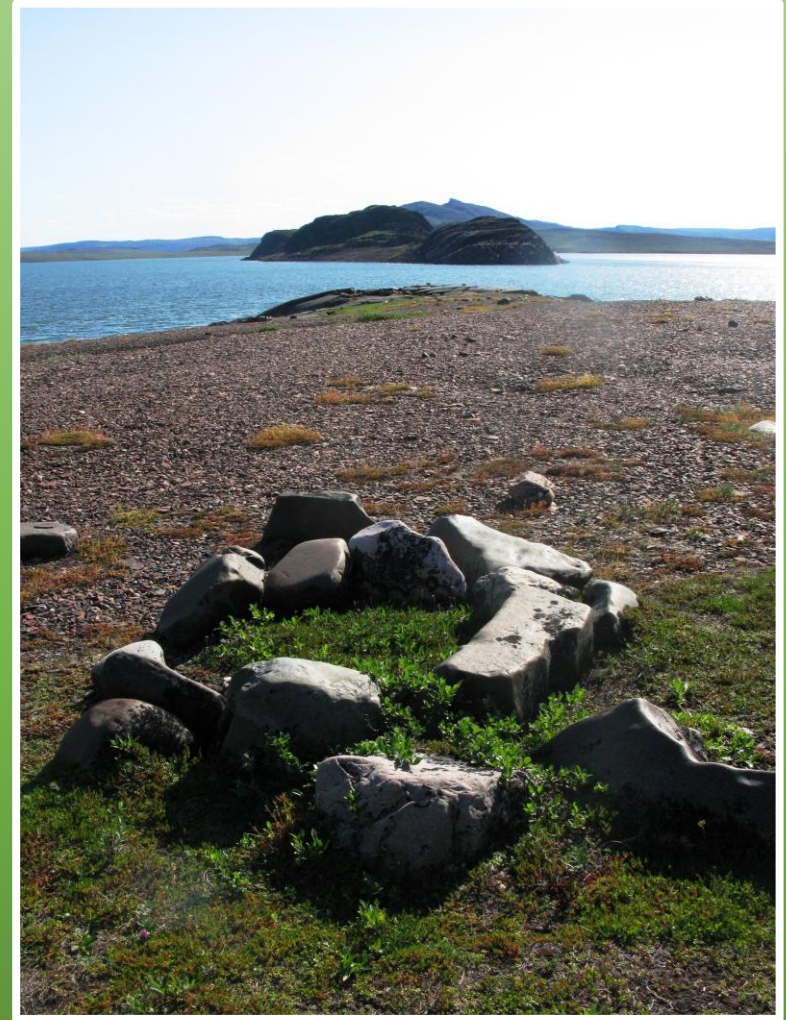
Archival photo of a caribou skin tent at the trading post at Arviat, probably 1940s. This tent, being closer to the treeline, and sources of spruce poles, was supported by several tent poles, much like a teepee. Inuit walked inland in summer to hunt caribou and cut spruce poles for various uses. Wood was highly valuable.



Archival photo: Woman adjusting the thong used to stabilize the tent pole at the back of the tent. Sometimes this was done from outside, sometimes from inside. This is likely taken inland, perhaps south of Baker Lake, Caribou Inuit group.



Old Thule Inuit tent ring with kitchen area, storage cache, double ring, and a paved area where people likely slept. (Light coloured line is a modern trail through this site, gravelled to keep visitors from walking through the archaeological sites. Qamaviniqtalik, near Rankin Inlet.



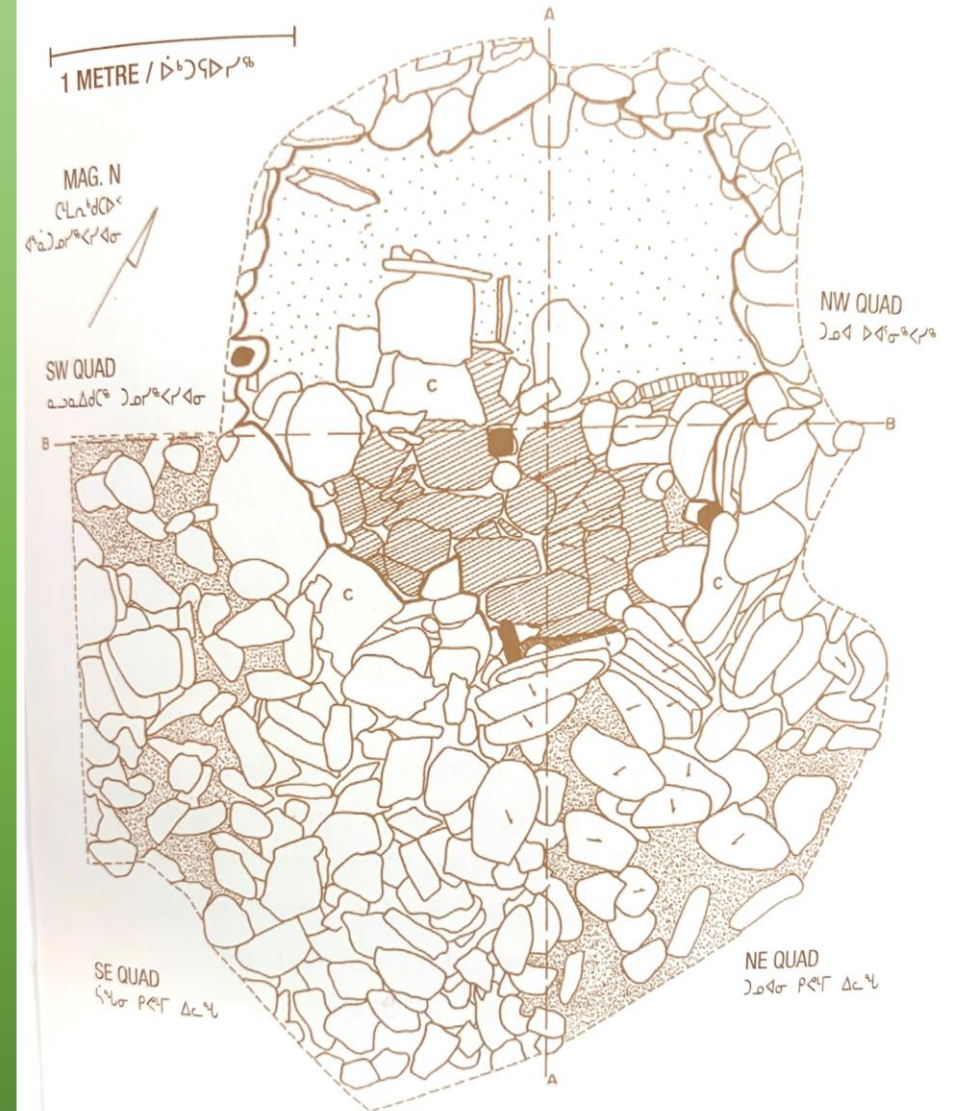
According to the Elders, these two similar tent rings, about 1000 km apart, served similar purposes. These were probably places where women gave birth. Several different Elders, of different ages and ethnic groups, said the same thing. Left: near Rankin Inlet. Right: at Bathurst Inlet.

Archaeological diagram of a qamat, a sod house. In fall or early winter, the people moved from tents into these dwellings, which could be insulated more easily.

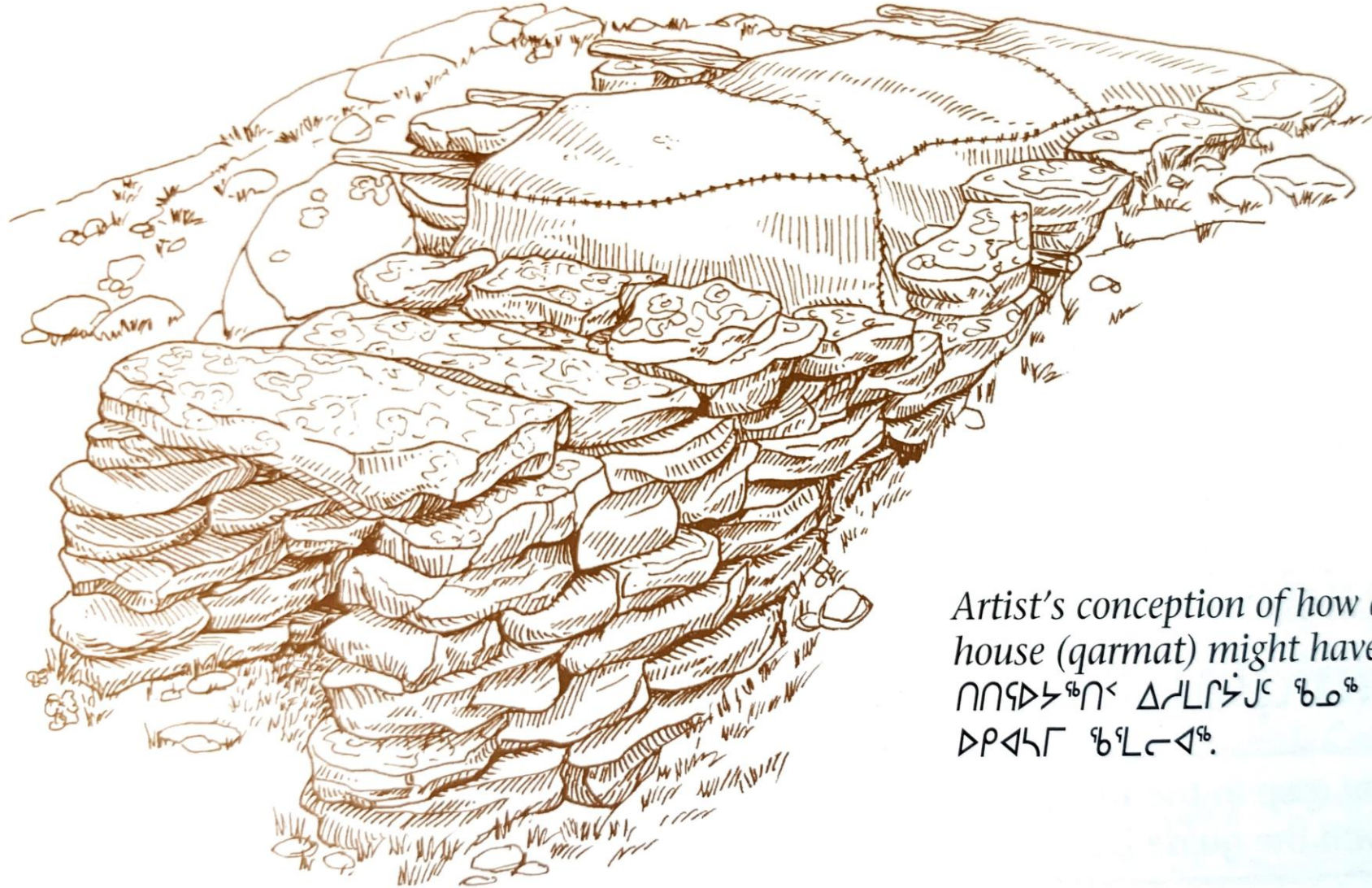
These were dug into banks or hillsides, and reinforced with stone slabs.

An excavated entrance provided a “cold trap” – you crawled through a tunnel into the house. Cold air accumulated in the tunnel and kept the warm air inside the house.

Illustration is from the fine paper by Linnaeae and Clark, *Archaeology of Rankin Inlet*.



From: Linnaeae and Clark's *Archaeology of Rankin Inlet*, illustration of archaeo-
logical site. Linnaeae and Clark *Archaeology of Rankin Inlet*, 1970, p. 100.



Artist's conception of how an autumn
house (qarmat) might have looked.
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View of the depression of an old qamat on an esker near Rankin Inlet. View is from just below where the door was located. (A “cold trap” entrance was in the doorway trench. The qamat was located on the leeward (south) side of the esker, for protection from strong NW winds in winter.



Another view of the qamat depression, from the side. Rock walls are visible. Rocks on the far side (arrow) are likely a drying rack, and white rocks in foreground were likely used to stabilize the roof. In the Eastern Arctic, the roofs might be supported by whale jawbones or ribs; in the Kivalliq, these were more likely to be spruce poles.



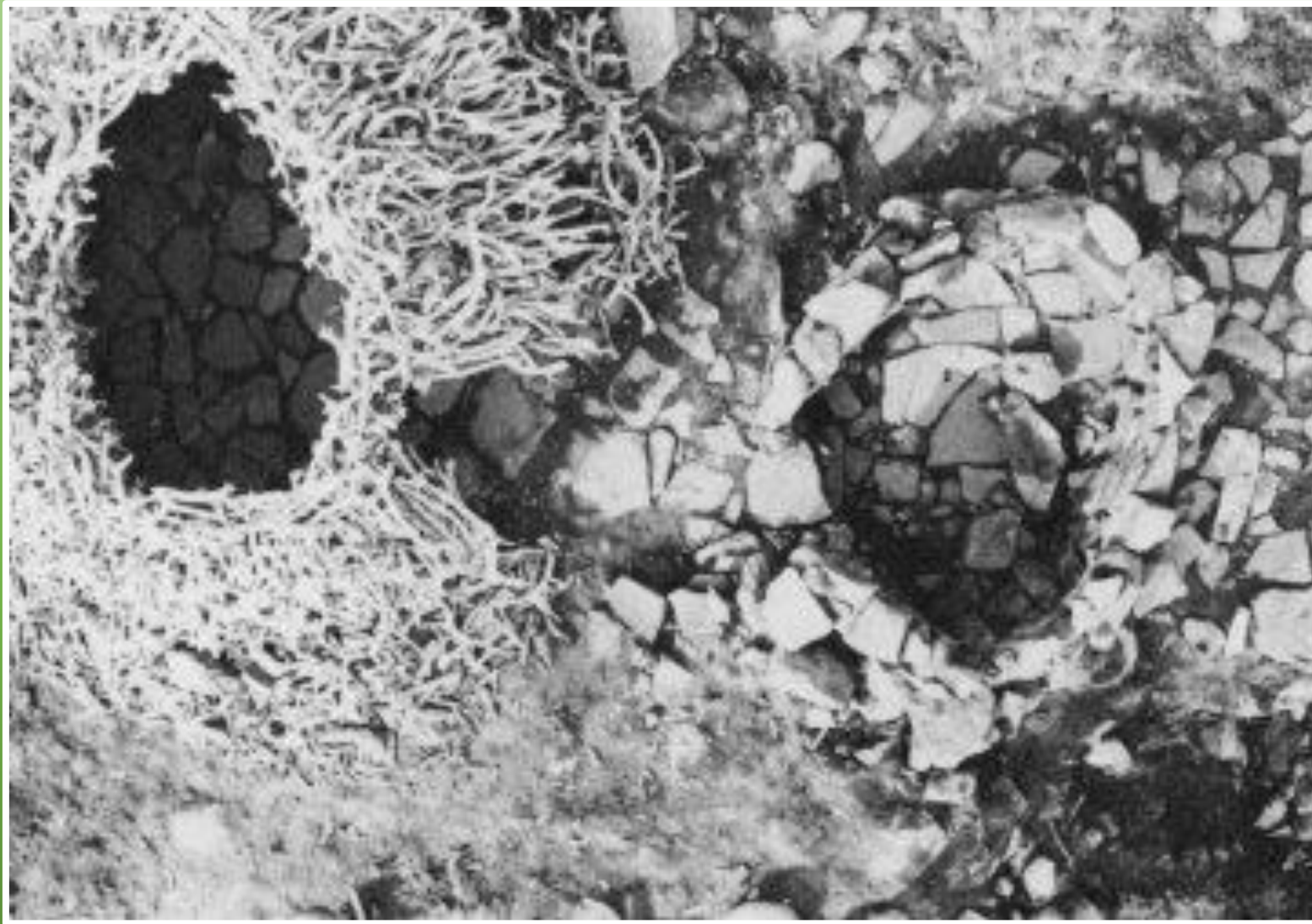
Drying racks beside qamat on esker near Rankin. Tan arrow indicates same rocks as in previous slide. The drying racks would be close to dwellings, so the people could keep animals from getting the food!



In colder places, such as north Baffin Island, where there is much bedrock, sod houses were built mostly aboveground, and, after Contact, these were mostly square, sometimes with a wooden door. This one has a combination of sealskin and caribou roofing and sod foundation.



This qamat reconstruction shows an elaborate entrance tunnel, well-constructed sleeping platform, and storage cabinets beneath the sleeping platform. Most of the sod has weathered away, leaving only the stones. Archival photo, likely a site near Igloolik.



A site on the Burnside River about 60 miles north of Point Lake (called Nadlok) has some unique antler dwellings. It is thought to be late Thule in origin, a hunting place for thousands of caribou crossing the river in late summer. Photo of reconstruction is taken from above. From work done by Bryan Gordon.



Artist's rendering of the wall of one of the houses at Nadlok.



Stone drying racks could be found close to almost all campsites. Fish, caribou, and muskox were dried to provide food for the lean times. Thongs were run from stone to stone to provide a rack to get the meat up in the air.



Here's how it worked. A thong ran from rocks on the ground, over two or more vertical rocks, then to another anchor rock. The tension was adjusted by adding rocks to tighten the thong.



White sandstone blocks make ideal drying rack supports. In this area, caribou (or char) was dried and stored in stone caches. Bathurst Inlet.



Today, Arctic char, lake trout, whitefish, and capelin are eaten all across the Arctic, and dried for later use as well. The backbones are removed and fish split, then hung to dry in the sun and wind.



Today, people still make piffi (or pipsi) but use scrap lumber to construct drying racks. Some folks build screen houses to protect their char from flies. Here, char and whitefish dry on racks.



Fishing at a stone weir in river. Stone gates are opened to allow fish to enter, then closed, and people spear them with long fish spear (Inuktitut: kakivak). Archival photo from the central Arctic coast.

Fishing at a stone weir (saputi),
with insets of fish pathway, kakivak,
and fish needle.

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Fish pathway
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Fish weir (saputi)
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Kakivak
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Fish needle
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Prior to the coming of the traders, who brought nets, people fished in different ways. One was to use a stone weir to guide fish into areas where they could be speared or gaffed. Fish needles were used as “stringers” to lace fish together until they could be taken to shore.





Archival photo of young woman going fishing. Note: boots (kamiit) and long kakivak or fish spear. Photo is likely from along the central Arctic coast.



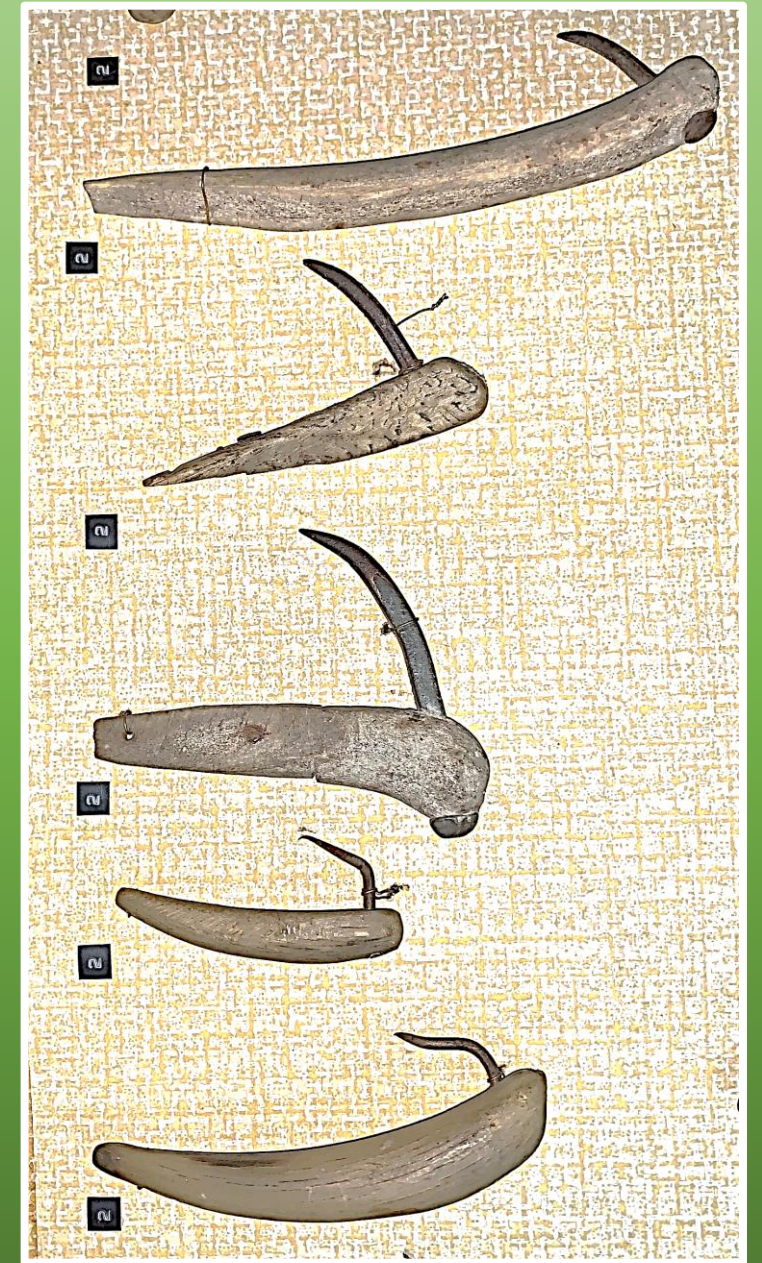
The kakivak was an important tool for fishing in swift water and at stone fish weirs, which were called saputiit.

The fish spears were usually about 2 m long, with the spreading prongs made of caribou antler or musk ox horn, a central lance (sometimes barbed) made of antler or metal.

When used, it was thrust into a fish. The central spear severed the backbone of the fish, and the prongs spread around the fish. The barbs on the prongs ensured the fish wasn't lost.

In small streams, where the large kakivak would not work, gaffs were often used to hook fish out of the stream.

People sometimes did not use any tools at all, but simply lay on the bank and flipped the char out of the water with their hands. You had to be QUICK!





Prior to the trade era, Inuit did not have fish nets. Sinew and skin thong didn't work when wet. Traders brought fabric nets (and later monofilament nets), and Inuit quickly learned how to use and repair them.

ABOVE: Net repair tools were developed, copying tools long used by other fishers, mostly from Scotland and the Orkney Islands.





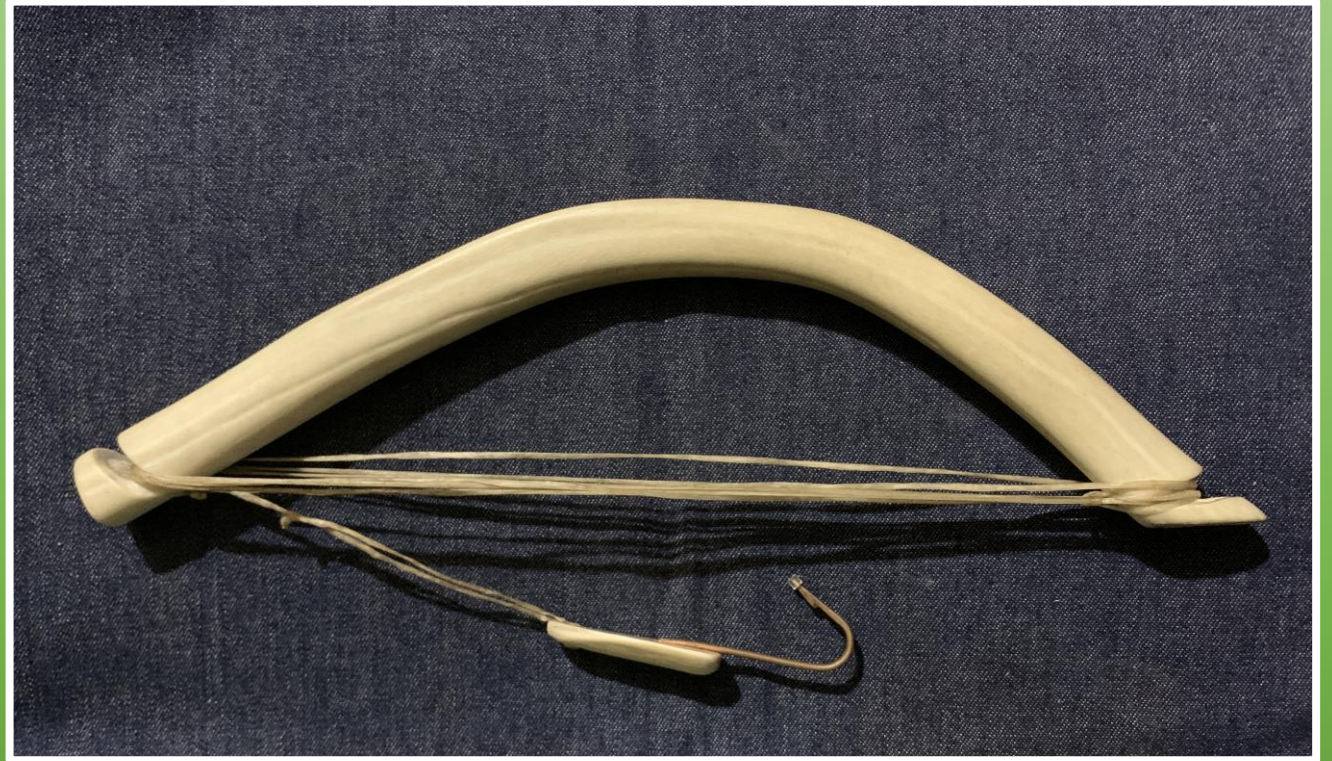
Old bone or antler fish lures.
These were not barbed, as the
barb could slow down the
removal of the fish.



In winter and spring, people fish through holes in the ice, and in spring, at “leads” in the ice of rivers and lakes. Whole families go out for the day, with people of all ages fishing patiently.



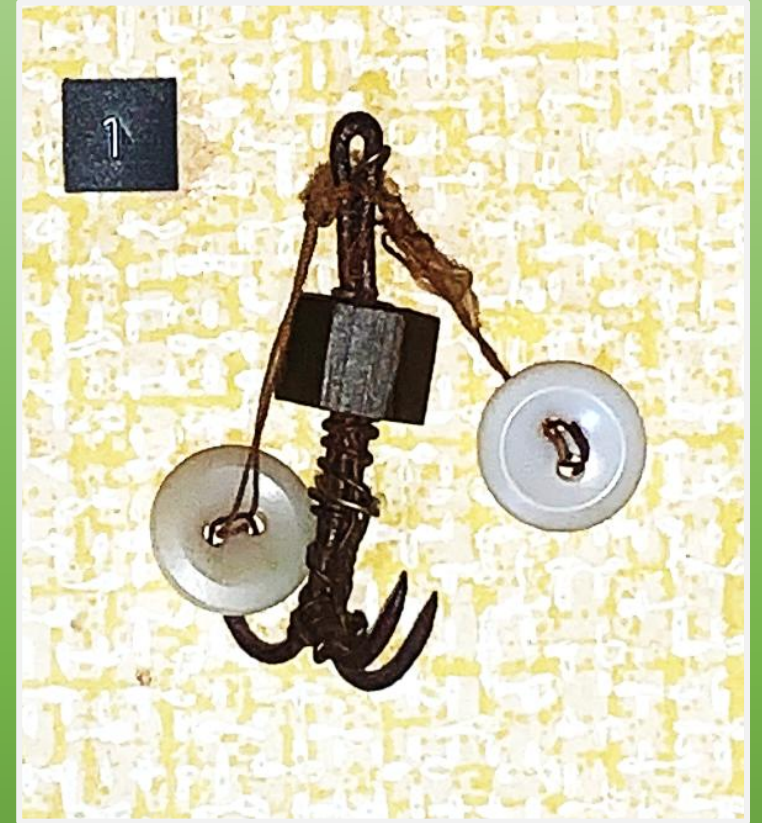
An old jigger made from a willow branch.



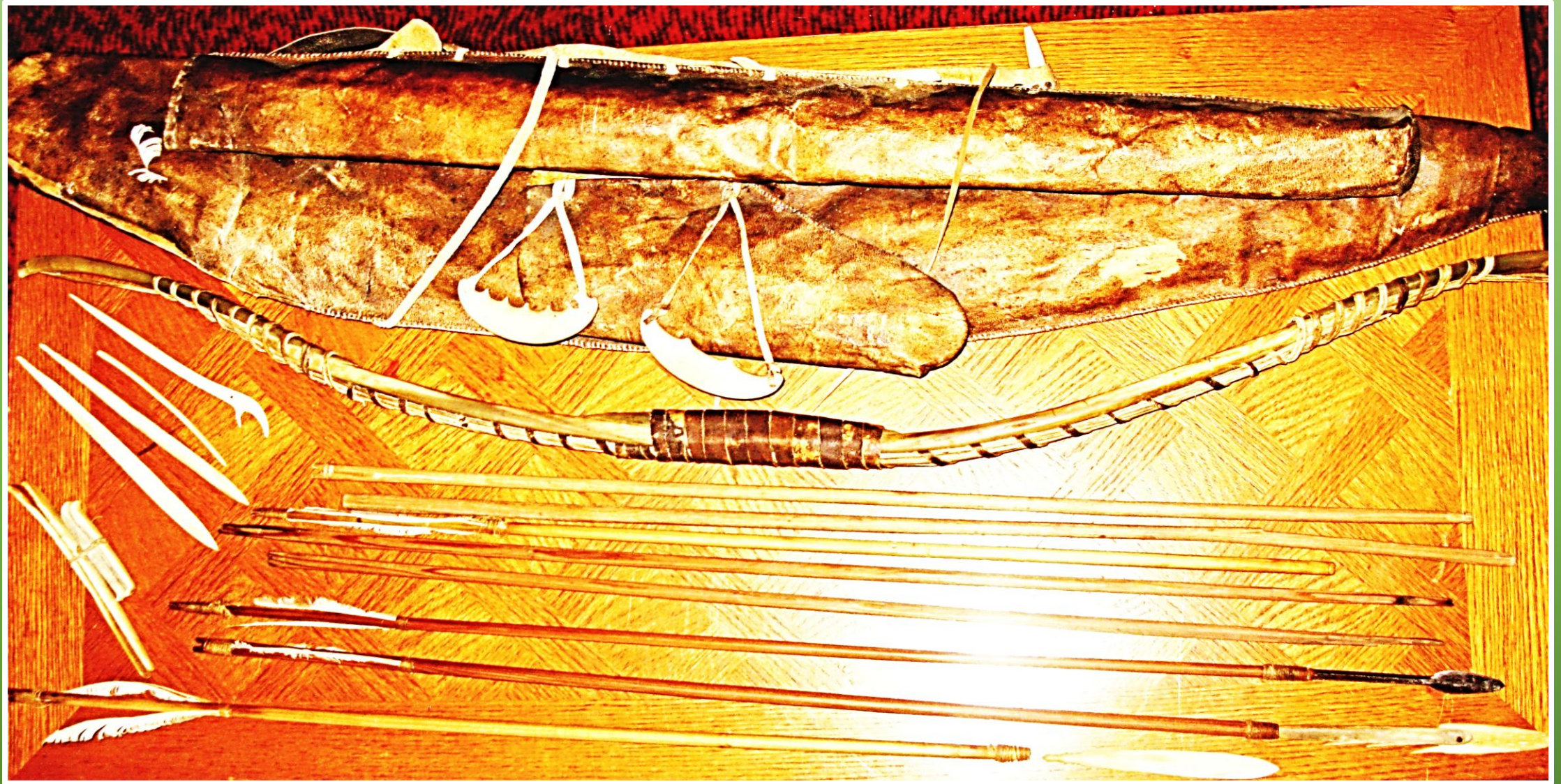
A more recent version made from a caribou antler with sinew line, a carved lure of bone and a shaped and sharpened nail, regular commercial lures are often used today. It's a durable tool, still used today.



Some jiggers were quite artistic with very creative lures.



Here's a fancy lure made from trade items, buttons, lead, and wire.



Musk ox horn bow set, including sealskin case, arrows, tensioning tools. Highly sophisticated hunting weapon. This set is from the Bathurst Inlet area, owned by the Warner family for 60 years.



Bow-shaping tool, made of (likely) moose antler. The muskox horn bow would be heated in water and, once pliable, would be inserted in the holes and then bent to the preferred shape. Allowed to cool; it would retain the shape. Central Arctic coast.



Arrow or spear foreshaft with mounted copper blade and barbs. This would have been used to hunt a wolf or bear, an animal that could reach around and pull out a projectile.



A hunter's view. Qamanuriaq herd, Meliadine River area near Rankin Inlet.



Within bowshot. Good distance to be taken with a muskox horn bow.



Caribou hunting “hide” or talu with “stand-in” caribou! Inukhuit game drive system is visible in the background. Fishing Creek, Bathurst Inlet.



Talu with passing caribou. This caribou would be within bowshot from the talu.



Elaborate talu on Meliadine Esker near Rankin Inlet, in migration path of the Qaminuriaq caribou herd.



Taluit are often quite small, just high enough to hide the hunters from caribou approaching from below.



Augustana University students trying out a talu.



Taluit can be used for more than caribou hunting. The talu in the background here is still used for waterfowl hunting. Swan Lake, Rankin Inlet.



Tony Manernaluk and Israel Aliyak with repaired sleeping shelter (siniktarvik) at Rankin Inlet after flood damage.

RIGHT: Tony's granddaughters chinking walls with moss.





Old siniktarvik near Rankin Inlet. “Siniktarvik” means “a place to sleep”. Emergency shelter that could be built for short stays. Fresh caribou hides could be draped over the top, making the shelter quite efficient.



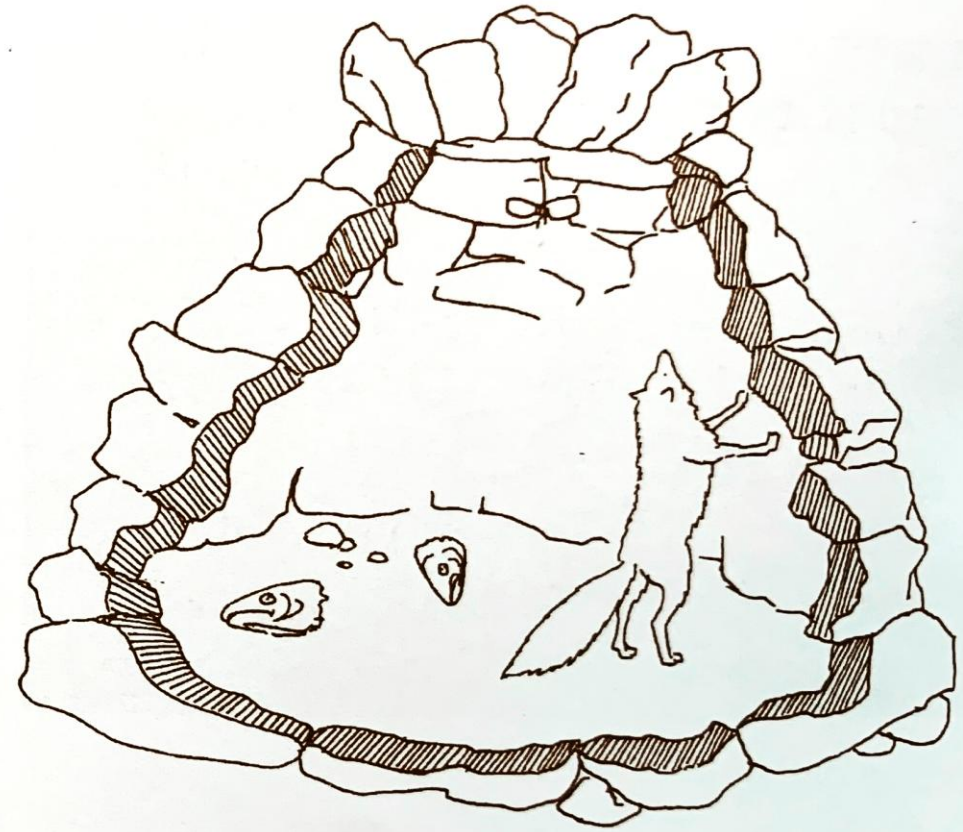
How to identify “old”? Look for lichens bridging stone to stone. Lichens are slow-growing and indicate that the stones have been in place a long time.



Stone fox trap, called an uplisautit. These are *old*, as no one would build something like this once they had steel leghold traps. These traps were used prior to the coming of trade goods, and were used to get rid of pesky foxes, not for fur.



Tower-type fox trap (uplisautit)
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Cutaway view showing fox and bait
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The inside of the trap was coated with water (ice), and bait was tied under the rim. A balanced stone would fall into the trap when the fox walked on it, tumbling the fox into the trap.



Box-type fox trap, called a “pulat”. Bathurst Inlet.



Wolf trap, Mary River Project, north Baffin. Door is closed in this photo. This structure is quite large.



Wolf trap, door removed by archaeological team to show the chamber inside. The stones are heavy, and dimensions such that the wolf cannot turn around once inside.



Storage cache, made of large stones, arranged with a cavity in middle, for storing food, clothing, tools.



Flat rocks were preferred for caches. Two people might be needed to place the lids. These were designed to keep out wolves, foxes, and smaller bears. With large bears, people were taking a chance.



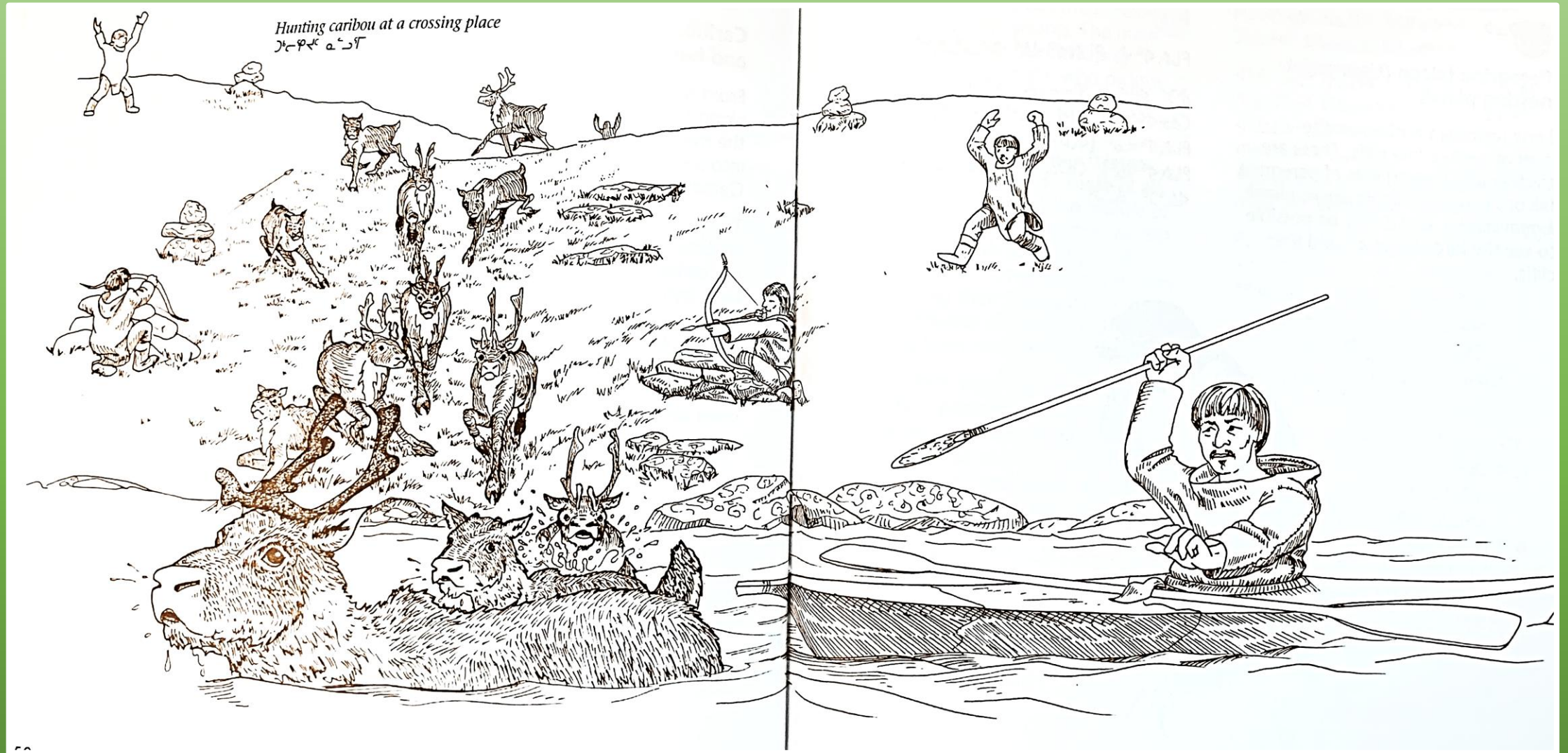
Twigs were used in bottom of a cache to keep the contents up off the wet ground.



An Inuit invention, the kayak (or qajaq) has gone mainstream and is used worldwide. In the eastern Arctic they were used for hunting and transportation; in the west, they were used mostly for hunting. Made of sealskin or caribou skin. Archival photo.



Very old paddle blade. Kayak paddles are double-bladed. This one is either from a broken paddle, or is a blade added to repair a paddle.



This drawing, used at Iqalugaarjuup Nunanga Territorial Park near Rankin Inlet, shows the use of inuksuit, bows, and the qajaq and lance to hunt caribou at a crossing place on a river.



Lance-type point for a caribou spear, probably used for hunting from a kayak. Caribou won't reach around and pull the spear out, so barbs are unnecessary.



Kayak racks were used to dry out the caribou skin kayaks used for hunting at leads in the spring sea ice. They were adjustable for different widths of kayaks by using a prop stone.



Some items need to be stored where bears can't reach them. This rock was used to store bags of seal fat for the oil lamps of the past. This fuel was essential for surviving the early winter.



The streaks are dehydrated seal oil, leaving the wax, caused when the bags of blubber broke and the oil leaked out.



Ovik Akoluk lighting a kudlik (qulliq) at Bathurst Inlet. The stone lamp was the sole source of heat, light, and cooking in the snow houses of the past. Always fascinating to the children.



Sam Kapolak interpreting stone lamps found out on the land, in a storage cache. Bathurst Inlet.



Kudlik (qulliq) made of a hard stone, possibly diabase. This would be extremely hard to carve, requiring great skill. The wick was placed along the sloping side. The wick tender was placed behind the ridge.



Old muskox horn blubber pounders. Used to pound caribou fat or seal blubber to make it pliable enough to pack into a kudlik (qulliq).



Detail of stone cooking pot. These were in use prior to the coming of metal pots. The amount of skill required to carve these thin walls from hard stone – incredible!



Muskox horn ladle. These all likely predate the coming of the traders.

Ladles made from antler. Used to dish out soup from soapstone pots. Food was not really highly cooked, but simply warmed enough to also make a broth, which helped keep people hydrated.



Model showing how a kudlik was set up to cook in an iglu. Made by Lena Kamoyoak, Bathurst Inlet.



Bow drill set, by Tony Manernaluk. This could be used to drill holes, scribe larger holes, and make fire. Caribou rib bone and sinew, Caribou tragus and willow shafts for drills. Rankin Inlet.



Bow-drill fire-making bases. Tinder (lichens, fine grasses, tiny twigs) are placed in the depressions and a bitless drill bit is rotated in the tinder until it ignites.



Sometimes there are absolute surprises. Here, in the High Arctic, on Devon Island, north of Lancaster Sound, a driftwood log lies in a frost crack.



Depressions indicate this is the base of a fire-making tool, used with a bow drill to hold tinder to start small fires that are then transferred to small hearths or to a kudlik. Above, Julia Ogina and Jerry Puglik explain the artifact to guests from a cruise ship.

Miscellaneous Tools.....



Interpretation of artifact collection. It is ALWAYS best to have interpretation done by a person from the community. Here, Sam Kapolak interprets many of the tools used by his ancestors.



Tools found around the old HBC trading post at Bathurst Inlet, and preserved for teaching purposes. These are accessioned into the museum in Yellowknife and on permanent loan back to the community of Bathurst Inlet.



Caribou skin bucket.



Antler beater – used to beat the frost out of caribou skin clothing after wearing.



Sewing kit, stored in a caribou leg bone, including needles and soapstone thimble.

Below sewing kit is caribou sinew to be used to make thread.



Detail of caribou skin strip from inside the bone case, copper needles stored in the strip.



Small copper uluit for sewing.





Retriever: Wooden implement that would be attached to a line and thrown out to retrieve something floating – like a seal carcass or goose. Carved from the base of a large willow tree.



Sunglasses, carved from wood (antler was also often used, but wood is lighter). The slits limit the amount of light entering and help prevent snow-blindness. The narrow slits also enhance the clarity of objects being seen.



These sunglasses were likely never finished.



Antler handle of a snow knife (pana) used for building an iglu.



Skin scraper used to prepare skins for clothing use.
ABOVE: scraper made from a caribou femur bone,
edge sharpened.
RIGHT: Scraper with metal blade and antler handle.





Several different styles of scrapers, caribou antler handles. Blade with holes is made from an old colander. Bathurst Inlet teaching collection.



Handmade plane – likely copied from a carpenter's plane. Used to plane wood, AND, to plane the mud/ice mixture used to make sled runners glide easily.

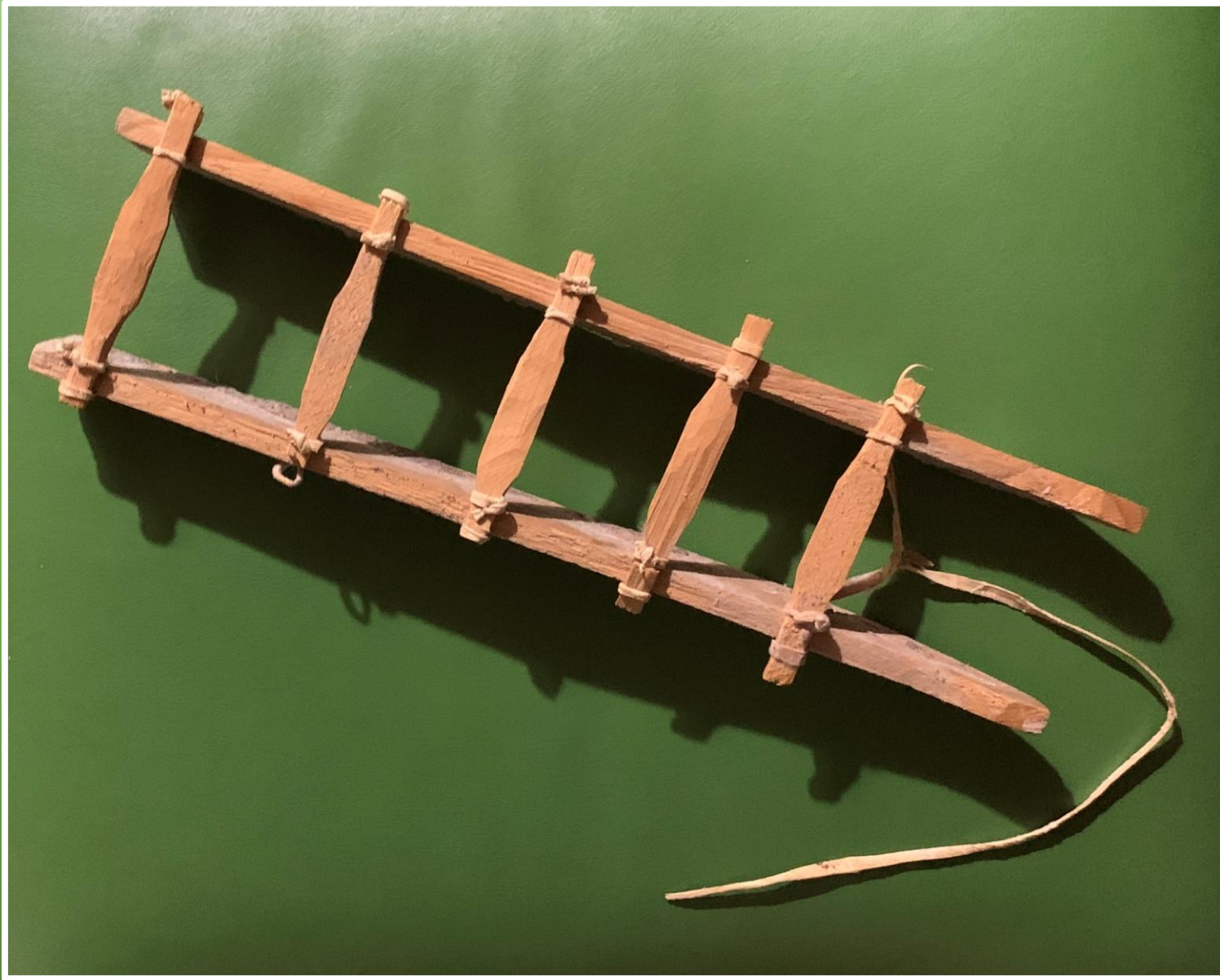


Modified bullet mold (reloader) and lead spoon. Note the handles were cut off (the brass was reused for other items); just enough handle was left to use the bullet mold.



Toy boat with “leading” stick, attached with a string or thong to pull boat along from the shore of a pond.

RIGHT: small metal “rudder” to keep the boat upright and straight. Found on a small island in Steensby Inlet during archaeological studies for the Mary River project. Left in place on the land.



Toy sled or adliak. Made by Lena Kamoyaok for teaching.



Toy boat. Contributed by a family at Bathurst Inlet for teaching.



Toy kayak (qajaq) and paddle.



Noisemaker toy, spun around the head on a thong, making a buzzing sound. This from the Steensby Inlet area on north Baffin Island.

Traditional Clothing

Copper Inuit clothing was cleverly designed and beautifully made. These are winter travelling outfits made from early winter hides.

There is no chemical tanning or smoking, the skin is just scraped and stretched.

Made by Mary Kaniak and modelled by her daughter Connie Kapolak and Ohokmik Akoluk.





Formal dance outfits used for drum dances and social events: Doris Kingnektak and Martha Akoluk in outfits made by Lena Kamoyaok. Fashionable but impractical.

Seal hunting outfit, outer layer (atigi) of caribou with caribou skin pants. Dogs were trained to find the seal breathing holes, then tied away from the hole while the hunter waited patiently.

Sometimes all nearby holes were located and blocked so the seal had only a few holes that were usable. Clothing made by Jessie Hagialok.

Lance Akoluk and Frosty



Quana (thank you) for exploring this presentation.

We hope you enjoyed this sharing of the Inuit culture of the Central Canadian Arctic.

The Inuit of Bathurst Inlet join me in celebrating the ingenuity and beauty of the structures and tools used by their ancestors. – Page Burt

One of the best reference books to the Kitengmiut culture of the Central Arctic is:

Inuit, Glimpses of an Arctic Past, by David Morrison and Georges-Hebert Germain, 1995, Canadian Museum of Civilization.

If in Cambridge Bay, check out the Visitor's Centre and the Kitikmeot Heritage Centre.