



**PITQUHIRNIKKUT
ILIAUTINIQ**
KITIKMEOT HERITAGE SOCIETY

Pitquhirnikkut Ilihautiniq / Kitikmeot Heritage Society teaming up with Southern Alberta Institute of Technology to design and construct a pilot green building in Cambridge Bay, Nunavut

May 18, 2021, Cambridge Bay, Nunavut – Construction begins next month at the **Southern Alberta Institute of Technology's (SAIT) Green Building Technologies Lab (GBT)** on a prefabricated green building, which will be deconstructed and shipped up to Cambridge Bay on this summer's barge. On **International Museum Day**, we are excited to share that we are undertaking a pilot project to bring new green energy technologies and materials to the Arctic, integrating them with local knowledge and priorities, evaluating the feasibility of concepts, and creating a community of practice that will one day make our long-term dream of a larger, purpose-built cultural centre possible.

Celebrating 25 years as a cultural organization this year, the Pitquhirnikkut Ilihautiniq / Kitikmeot Heritage Society has spent more than two decades dedicated to the renewal of Inuinnait culture and the Inuinaqtun language. Every step, every project, every new idea has gathered knowledge, provided lessons learned, and built our capacity to take on this project.

Our goal is to create a building that is scalable, using it as a model for similar structures, or larger and more complex builds. Rooted in Inuinnait culture, we will prioritize sustainability, energy efficient design to reduce consumption, renewable sources of energy to transition away from fossil fuels, community engagement, the creation of local jobs and capacity, and work to solve infrastructure issues faced by remote communities.

No community in the territory is untouched by the housing crisis, with demand outpacing supply, chronic maintenance issues, and affordability among the key factors. Infrastructure as a concept is challenging given the extreme climate and the reality of building on shifting permafrost. A long history of infrastructure designed and developed based on what works in non-Arctic climates has resulted in buildings imposed on a landscape that they are ill-suited for. Decades of archaeological investigation of historic structures, careful research, and oral heritage interviews with Elders have given us insight into what Arctic and Inuinnait architecture has looked like and could look like.

As we move forward with this pilot project, we walk in the footsteps of our ancestors. We will continue to rely on innovation and ingenuity to solve building challenges in the North, now with modern considerations such as energy consumption and cost.

The PI/KHS is no stranger to research and experimentation. As we relearn and revitalize traditions and practices, we find ourselves often piecing together knowledge, taking steps back to gain perspective, consulting our experts and knowledge holders, and learning what works and what does not work. This deep history has informed the pilot project and shown us that we

need to design, conceptualize and re-conceptualize ideas, working with a tangible model in order to understand the big picture.

When we tackle any project, we consider where we have come from and all of the lessons we have learned along the way. In 2012, the Elders wanted to build a qalgiq (a large iglu used for community gatherings and celebrations). Quickly realizing the project was too ambitious to start with, our group refocused, started working on smaller structures, sharing knowledge, teaching community members, before we had the capacity, tools, and network of knowledge needed to build a larger structure. Over the last 25 years, this has been our approach. We research, practice, adapt, adjust, learn, teach, and grow. We want to consider our traditions, new ideas, and figure out for ourselves how everything works, and if it works, before adopting practices. In this way, we are reclaiming our ability to make decisions that work in the best interests of Inuinnaït, and of our communities.

At the heart of our research is a commitment to create something 'from the land'—in Inuinnaqtun, nunamiutuqaq. We are conceptualizing how a building is integrated with its environment, harmonizing with the surrounding landscape rather than being at odds with it.

Industry partners from coast to coast to coast have stepped up to work alongside the PI/KHS and SAIT, sharing their knowledge and expertise to navigate the challenges and excitement around building sustainably in the Arctic.

Since 2019, the PI/KHS has been working with the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology to consider the challenges of developing long-term sustainable infrastructure for our use that is 1) replicable at various scales elsewhere in the Arctic, and 2) is a 'living' modular space, with a floor plan that can be changed around to meet a variety of needs and outcomes depending on its use.

SAIT brings over 100 years of expertise as a future-forward institution working to create better solutions, expand opportunities and shape the next generation. SAIT specializes in applied education programs, prioritizing real world experience in the classroom working with community partners like the PI/KHS. From concept, design and building opportunities based in Alberta and community capacity building in Nunavut, we are equipping the next generation of green leaders to reimagine the world they leave for generations to come.

Together, we are developing an initial design of a 750 square foot green building that will be built next month in Calgary, rooted in Inuinnaït culture but integrating leading green technology solutions adapted specifically for our needs.

The final product will be versatile and hopefully become a model for many different infrastructure projects, based on direction and insight from our Board and from the community. The structure will be used in a capacity that will strengthen our mission and help our organization carry out our urgent priorities. Whether as a living space to bring on new staff, or as a cultural hub, or an outcome yet to be determined, it will have a distinct purpose in addition to its use as a tangible research and testing model for a larger future building.

With the help of the SAIT team, it will be built within the Cambridge Bay townsite beginning in September 2021, training local community members and partners in the process.

As we look towards a post-pandemic recovery and the priorities embedded in our 2019-2024 Strategic Plan, this partnership with SAIT is empowering us to build towards a sustainable

future. Not only are we investigating what that means in terms of green energy, but what that means after 25 years as we build on our strengths and visualize a future where our language and culture are thriving.

Every year since 1977, the world celebrates International Museum Day and its objective to raise awareness about the fact that, “Museums are an important means of cultural exchange, enrichment of cultures and development of mutual understanding, cooperation and peace among peoples.”

We couldn’t think of a better way to celebrate—collaborating across sectors, exchanging knowledge, building an understanding of our challenges, and learning from each other, as we build a pathway towards a future space and place that embodies our living culture.

Check out our new project website to learn more about our plans, including how we're taking ownership of our carbon footprint and creating an organizational Climate Action Strategy: www.nunamiutuqaq.ca

“Creating Inuit driven designs is not only cutting edge and ingenious like our ancestors who created and designed the Iglu. Today, we now have the capacity as a people to think outside the curved walls and partner on research projects to create a structure that flows with our landscape and also be energy efficient and sustainable just as our ancestors did with the resources that they had available. We hope this model can be adapted and used in future designs to aid in the crisis that our people face. As we ride the wave of the pandemic, we know this is a possible solution to help our people across our homeland.”

— Pamela Hakongak Gross, Executive Director

“We are so fortunate in our society today to try new technology, as did our Inuinnait ancestors’ way back then with their own technology, preserving our Earth, what it brings to us, we must respect that, and am very grateful we are doing just that with this new design for a green building and future planning for an Inuinnait Knowledge Centre.”

— Emily Angulalik, PI/KHS Board President

“SAIT is proud to partner with the Pitquhirnikkut Ilihautiniq / Kitikmeot Heritage Society on such a unique pilot project. This project brings together all of the elements we strive to integrate into a truly sustainable solution for buildings – bridging the gaps between technology, environment, culture and community – and really listening to each other as we come together with an amazing group of people to collaborate on Nunamiutuqaq / Building from the Land.”

— Melanie Ross, Research Manager, Green Building Technologies, SAIT

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[Pitquhirnikkut Ilihautiniq / Kitikmeot Heritage Society](#)

Founded in 1996, the Pitquhirnikkut Ilihautiniq / Kitikmeot Heritage Society is guided by an Inuinnaq Executive Director and Inuinnaq Board, and is one of the territory's longest established heritage organizations. We address projects of importance to the revival of Inuit culture, language and history and focus on the critical needs of Inuinnaq—a distinct regional group of Inuit living in the Central Canadian Arctic. The Inuinnaq language—the foundation of Inuinnaq culture—has less than 600 fluent speakers remaining. By most estimates, it is a language that will be extinct in less than two generations. Faced with an urgent timeline, we have made an unwavering commitment to support the renewal of Inuinnaq culture and the revitalization of Inuinnaq.

[SAIT's Green Building Technologies \(GBT\)](#)

For more than a decade, GBT researchers from SAIT's Applied Research and Innovation Services have worked with SAIT students to help businesses develop green technology, programs, systems and services. GBT's goal is to help enterprises market their environmentally-friendly technologies in Canada, while transforming the way we grow and develop skilled labour. Additionally, as an applied research facility, the Green Building Technology (GBT) Lab and Demonstration Centre provide hands-on training and industry-based experience. Working in cooperation with builders, government, regulatory bodies and numerous stakeholders, the GBT team brings new products and processes to the green building marketplace. Our on-campus research facilities are flexible, living laboratories.

[About SAIT](#)

Established in 1916, SAIT was the first publicly funded technical school of its kind in North America. Today, SAIT is a global leader in applied education, delivering relevant, skill-oriented education to more than 36,000 people annually. With more than 250,000 alumni in more than 110 countries, SAIT offers three baccalaureate degrees, three applied degrees, 84 diploma and certificate programs, 27 apprenticeship trades and more than 1,100 continuing education, corporate training, camps and other open registration courses. Curriculum at SAIT is developed through industry partnerships to ensure graduates have the skills and knowledge required in the

workplace. In Fall 2020, with a historic gift from philanthropist David Bisset, SAIT opened its ninth school — the [School for Advanced Digital Technology](#). SAIT is honoured to be selected by Mediacorp Canada Inc. as one of Alberta's Top Employers for 2021.
