



**PITQUHIRNIKKUT
ILHAUTINIQ**
KITIKMEOT HERITAGE SOCIETY

Pitquhirnikkut Ilihautiniq / Kitikmeot Heritage Society's construction of a "green" cultural workspace to change the game for sustainable infrastructure in the Arctic

Earth Day – April 22, 2022, 8am MST, Cambridge Bay, Nunavut – The final blueprints for the Pitquhirnikkut Ilihautiniq / Kitikmeot Heritage Society's (PI/KHS) game-changing new cultural workspace lay out the vision of a future where our values and connection to the land, our language, and our culture, are restored.

Living in a landscape that has been facing the dangerous effects of climate change for decades, we recognize that action must be taken now. We're working to preserve, protect and renew our language and culture, at a time when our very lifestyle, how we have lived, and who we have been for millennia, is at risk. With 25 years of experience in Inuit-driven research and programming, the PI/KHS sees the opportunity and the necessity to take a position of leadership in the movement towards sustainability. Even deeper than this decades-long history as a cultural organization, is our responsibility to maintain the balance between humans and the land, which has been long upheld by our ancestors.

Cultural revitalization requires easy access to the land, and indoor space that's functional for traditional activities. In May 2021, we launched [Nunamiutugaq \(Building from the Land\)](#)—a systematic approach to strengthening the North's sustainability and resilience to climate change. Our partnership with the [Green Building Technologies Access Center \(GBTAC\) at the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology \(SAIT\)](#), renewable energy researchers and professionals from across the country, and local industry partners Qillaq Innovations, CHOU Consulting and Development, and Aurora Energy Solutions is allowing us to explore the challenges of developing long-term, sustainable infrastructure for the Canadian Arctic that both draws from traditional knowledge and uses experimental materials and technologies, envisioning a better world for future generations. Our goal is to create buildings that are culturally informed, scalable, and incorporate the newest advances in renewable energy and sustainable design.

Today, we are excited to unveil Kuugalak. The name Kuugalak references the waterway adjacent to the new building; one that local Elders say used to run wide and deep, but which has been reduced to a small creek due to climate change. As we focus on climate adaptation and cultural revitalization, our aim is for Kuugalak to be both a symbol and a place where our knowledge and our connection to the landscape flows deep through the community once again.

"This building will be utilized for our future generations to come and to learn and remember the importance of Inuit traditional knowledge..." – Bessie Omilgoetok, PI/KHS Honourary Chair

Kuugalak has been carefully designed to work with the landscape within our newly purchased property on Okalik Street in Cambridge Bay. The Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency's Canada Community Revitalization Fund has confirmed \$766,018 towards the construction of the building—which is expected to cost \$1.7 million to complete, inclusive of research, building materials,

and ongoing performance monitoring. This builds on previous and ongoing funding from Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., the Government of Nunavut, Crown-Indigenous Relations & Northern Affairs Canada, and Indigenous Clean Energy, all of whom have supported the feasibility and pre-construction phases.

“Culturally-relevant spaces where Nunavummiut can gather for cultural and educational activities improve the overall health and resiliency of local communities. Our government is working in partnership in support of the construction of a workshop space that will meet these goals by providing a forum where traditional Inuit skills can be shared, learned, and practiced. This workshop, located within an eco-friendly structure, will contribute to the protection of the Arctic for future generations.” – The Honourable Daniel Vandal, Minister of Northern Affairs, Minister for PrairiesCan and Minister for CanNor

“We are grateful to have support. This building will be our place to reconnect and carry out our Inuit language and culture through cultural programming.” – Annie Atighioyak, PI/KHS Board President

Since 2019, we have been reimagining the future of culturally rooted Arctic infrastructure through this 1,200 square foot cultural workspace. It is our intention for this building to genuinely emerge from the land we live in, aligned with its environment, its people, and its priorities for an Inuinnait future. As we move forward with this ambitious project, we walk in the footsteps of our ancestors and continue to rely on the innovation and ingenuity of our culture to solve our greatest challenges. The insight that we need to create better buildings in the North can only be found in the North itself.

The design of Kuugalak has emerged from a combination of local archaeology, Elder recollections of traditional architecture, and [dozens of interviews](#) with local homeowners, builders, and cultural producers. In addition to facilitating cultural programming and artistic production in our community, this highly customized structure serves as a research tool to better understand the performance and efficacy of renewable and energy efficient technologies in Arctic conditions. 24/7 monitoring of the building’s performance in years following construction will help us evaluate its success and potential for replication, application, and scaling for future builds across the territory. Our aim is for this pilot building to redefine the landscape of how we build in the Arctic, with a foundation rooted in our culture and ways of being.

The pilot structure will be assembled by GBTAC and Cambridge Bay partners at SAIT’s construction facilities in Calgary in May 2022, and shipped to Cambridge Bay for reconstruction by the team in Fall 2022. On-site construction of the building will be overseen by local industry partners, and will take place in a way that ensures all knowledge required for long-term operation and maintenance resides within the community.

Once completed, this cultural workspace will become the hub for linguistic and cultural revitalization in Cambridge Bay. Lessons learned will be shared and accessible, so that the obstacles and challenges we encountered will provide sustainable solutions, not stumbling blocks.

“Canada’s Arctic is an important part of our history and a major barometer for environmental health. This project exemplifies how we need to refocus on collaboration, to find solutions to critical environmental issues together, and share our knowledge far and wide to the benefit of all.” – Melanie Ross, Scientific Lead, GBTAC

As we look to the health and wellbeing of our communities and our culture, the buildings we make—and our lives within them—must be integrated with the environment, harmonized with our surrounding landscape, rather than at odds with it.

[Blueprints \(Inuinnaqtun\)](#)

[Blueprints \(English\)](#)

[Kuugalak 3D rendering \(Bird's Eye View\)](#)

[Kuugalak 3D rendering \(General View\)](#)

[Kuugalak 3D rendering \(Cross Street View\)](#)

For more information or to arrange interviews, please contact:

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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 Inuinnaqtun 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 Inuinnaqtun.

[SAIT's Green Building Technologies Access Centre \(GBTAC\)](#)

For more than a decade, GBTAC researchers from SAIT's Applied Research and Innovation Services have worked with SAIT students, faculty, industry organizations, and businesses to develop green technology, programs, systems and services. As an applied research facility, the Green Building Technology Lab and Demonstration Centre provide hands-on training and industry-based experience. The on-campus research facilities are flexible, living laboratories, designed to study the many aspects of buildings and their environment including: net-zero energy and carbon emissions, materials and building science, site ecology, renewable energy solutions, and healthy buildings. Working in cooperation with builders, government, regulatory bodies and numerous stakeholders, the GBTAC team brings new products and processes to the green building marketplace and aims to transform the green building industry.

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 and was named #6 in Infosource's Top Research Colleges in Canada.
