Introduction: Arctic Adaptations

2014 marks the 15th anniversary of the founding of Nunavut. However, Canada’s largest, most northerly territory is still unfamiliar to many Canadians. The myth of the Canadian north is tied to its unique geography – vast, sparsely populated, fragile, and sublime. Yet Nunavut, like the entire Arctic region, is undergoing dramatic transformation as powerful climatic, social, and economic pressures rapidly collide. In Nunavut, over 50% of the population is under the age of 25, making it a young, dynamic nation. Simultaneously, most Northern municipalities are under pressure to address ongoing social and economic challenges regarding health, housing, education, and employment.

The theme of 15 is echoed in the team structure. Working in collaboration with five Nunavut-based organizations, design teams – comprised of a Canadian architecture office and a Canadian school of architecture – will develop a 15-year vision plan for both a regional (territory) and architectural (building) scale on a particular theme. The themes are: Arts, Education, Health, Housing, and Recreation. Arctic Adaptations seeks to foster a collective discourse in schools, amongst architecture practices, and within Nunavut communities, on a proactive architecture motivated by progressive social and environmental responsibility.
Introduction to Nunavut

Before the arrival of other peoples in the North, Inuit had always lived a nomadic lifestyle in *ilagit nunavigatangat* or camps (Qikiqtani Inuit Association [QIA], 2012). In the Baffin region alone, families lived in over 100 locations in kin-based camps. Although the process of relocation to communities began as a response by Inuit to the presence of traders, explorers, and missionaries, it took new form during the ‘settlement’ period between 1940 and 1960. During that time, Inuit were moved off the land and into communities for a number of reasons, including policing, education, and the provision of health care for remote populations during a widespread Tuberculosis epidemic and reports of starvation among some Inuit camps (Kirmayer, Brass & Tait, 2000; Indian and Northern Affairs Canada [INAC], 1996).
The changes imposed on Inuit in order to achieve this goal were rapid and dramatic—this was not a gradual progression from a traditional to a modern way of life, but a complete transformation. As a result, families were severed, people were sent away never to return, and the way of life changed completely.

Today, there are 26 communities in Nunavut ranging in size from populations of 110 to 7500. All of the communities are geographically isolated and are only accessible by air, water, or snowmobile in winter. Nunavut has a very young population. In 2011 52% of the Nunavut population (31,906) was comprised of those 24 years of age and younger. While the North is increasingly becoming a mixed cultural population, 85% of Nunavut’s population is Inuit. Further, 68% of Nunavummiut speak the Inuit languages of Inuktitut or Inuinnaqtun (Statistics Canada, 2011).

All Northerners are facing a new transformation together; a climate change where warming temperatures are challenging notions of permanence and transience alike (everything from melting permafrost foundations to shifting migration patterns of major food sources). However this rapidly warming climate is also yielding many unforeseen opportunities including stretched transportation windows in the arctic archipelago. These effects of climate change are especially challenging in Nunavut, with both a very young history as a territorial government and a growing young population confronted with these challenges and opportunities embedded in a terrain that is experiencing such rapid change.

Introduction to Arts in Nunavut

The contemporary Arts culture in Nunavut is currently experiencing a unique form of adaptive development, where artists are both rediscovering and reinventing traditional art forms while exploring and adapting to emergent categories. For the Inuit, the stories go back centuries and yet are also evolving, addressing current issues and producing new stories about contemporary Inuit society. Young artists in every field are merging traditional and contemporary arts in innovative ways.

Historically, many of the Inuit Performing Arts were banished by missionaries during the past century and are only now being retrieved before they are lost forever (Qaggiavuut!, 2013). Nunavut is rich in the Inuit Performing Arts—from throat singing to original rap, storytelling to circus, button accordion to drum dancing (Qaggiavuut!, 2013). Nunavummiut have been celebrated throughout the world as talented artists that have made an indelible mark. Kenojuak Ashevak’s iconic prints, Tanya Tagak’s impassioned throat singing and Zacharias Kunuk’s award-winning film ‘Atanarjuat: Fast Runner’ are just a few examples of the variety and excellence of Inuit arts.

As evidence of this, the territory boasts the greatest number of people per capita involved in the production of crafts and in the arts industry than anywhere else in the world (Nunavut Tourism, 2013). Various initiatives across the territory have begun, to maintain traditional crafts and Visual Arts and transmit knowledge, while sustaining micro economies.

Contemporary arts culture is equally vibrant. Several arts festivals punctuate the year in Nunavut – the best known include Alianait, and the Nunavut Arts Festival. Numerous institutions such as Isuma Productions, Arnait Video Productions, and Artcirq, among others, produce and promote contemporary Inuit art across the territory and beyond. Similarly, Qaggiavuut! marks a unique, and very large network of artists working across all the performing arts fields, and from across the territory. Further, new fields of art are being embraced by both established artists and the burgeoning youth of the territory.
Both New Media Arts and Performance Arts are being explored through the media of installations, digital arts, interactive environments, and audience based interactions. Indeed, the future of Nunavut’s Arts culture seems to embrace both traditional and reinvented forms of Visual Arts and Performing Arts but will also be actively engaged with the emerging mediums of New Media Arts and Performance Arts.

**Design Challenge for Arts in Nunavut**

Providing space to host the arts requires a broad set of considerations; ranging from community and cultural context to the provision of balance in both the traditional and new art forms. Currently, there is no dedicated space for performing arts in Nunavut, nor is there a heritage center or museum promoting the arts in Nunavut. Performance often happens in ad hoc assemblies in schools or community centres, New Media Arts are carried out without any support or outlet, often in homes, and there is very little provision for training in the traditional or contemporary Visual Arts. However, more importantly is that these current building types that are trying to support the arts, as they might be conceived of in southern Canada, may not adequately address the potential to continue fostering creative mediums specific to Nunavummiut.

The proposal of a single structure or building, though likely and necessary, would also serve to concentrate the arts within one or two communities, to the exclusion of many others. As traditions in the arts and new explorations strengthen across the territory, it appears that a different approach to delivery and access to arts may be more suitable in this context. Additional challenges include how buildings dedicated to the arts might be maintained, cared for, and how they might be programmed to accommodate a wide range of users and groups. Furthermore, design proposals should also take into consideration the need to accommodate for not only the consumption but also the production of arts. The allocation of space for studios, training, special equipment, and the interaction between creator and audience, the space of performance and the environment or land are all key spatial aspects specific to Nunavut artists which would foster a robust and evolving northern arts culture.
Key questions and design questions are summarized below:

- How might a single larger arts centre be programmed and conceived, as distinction to smaller, more distributed facilities in smaller communities?
- How can arts facilities respond to the audiences and artists of the dispersed Nunavut communities?
- How can arts facilities include spatial and programmatic provisions for both the production and consumption of arts?
- How might spaces and structures address flexibility for a variety of events and activities?
- If many groups share a building, how might spaces be allocated and used?
- How might the designs strategically embrace or react to the unique seasons and climate?
- How would the designs respond to the particular cultures and traditions of artistic production in Nunavut?
- How might new technologies be incorporated into a vision plan for the delivery and access of arts locally, but also at a national and international scale?
- How might patrons in Southern Canada or in other parts of the world participate in Nunavut arts?

With its 15th anniversary approaching, Nunavut now needs a 2030 vision for the promotion, delivery, and access to the arts across the territory, design proposals should represent this vision at two scales: (1) a territorial or regional scale considering networks or exchanges of knowledge and ideas; and (2) an architectural and typological scale. The regional scale should describe how the proposal positively impacts a larger territory: through networks of mobility, trade, exchange, etc..., and how it impacts environment, species or multiple communities. The architectural scale should describe ideas about site, and temporal changes of the building through seasons with respect to users, program and building performance.

Program and Site
It is up to each team to determine the site(s) and program relative to the theme of Arts in Nunavut. The expectation is that teams will select site and program based on in-depth research on the challenges and opportunities which Nunavut faces relative to the production, dissemination, and expansion of the Arts. Which communities are either in greatest need, or already thriving, or beginning new initiatives? And how might communities share this Arts infrastructure?
Online Resources
Alianait Arts Festival: www.alianait.ca
Artcirq: www.artcirq.org/index_en.htm
Angava: www.reverbnation.com/angava
Beatrice Deer: www.myspace.com/beatricedeerband
Canadian Northern Scene: http://nac-cna.ca/northernscence
Inuit Cultural Online Resource: http://icor.ottawainuitchildrens.com/
Inuit Myths: www.inuitmyths.com/
Inuksuk Records: www.inuksukproductions.ca/recordstore.html
Inuk Hip Hop: http://inukhiphop.com/
Lucie Idlout: www.lucieidlout.com ; www.youtube.com/watch?v=bH11Y45ZUIY
Matchbox Gallery, Rankin Inlet: www.matchboxgallery.com/
Nunavut Arts and Crafts Association: www.nacaarts.org
Nunavut Tourism: www.nunavuttourism.com
Qaggiavuut!: www.qaggiavuut.ca
Sharing our Stories: www.nfb.ca/playlist/unikkausivut-sharing-our-stories/
Susan Aglukark: www.susanaglukark.com/
Taima: www.myspace.com/taimaproject
Tanya Tagaq: www.myspace.com/tagaq
Toonik Tyme Festival: www.tooniktyme.com
Uqqurmiut Centre for Arts and Crafts, Pangnirtung: www.uqqurmiut.com/

Films
Literature

ART


ARCHITECTURE


GENERAL


Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami. 5000 Years of Inuit History and Heritage. https://www.itk.ca/publication/5000-years-inuit-history-and-heritage


**Competition Information**

**The Challenge**
The focus at this stage of the competition is on *strong ideas, rooted in thorough research and addressing clear, specific issues*. Design intent needs to be clear, but not necessarily extensively resolved at a formal or tectonic level.

In developing proposals, teams are encouraged to carefully consider what issues the project is addressing? How does it respond to the region's climate and geography in particularly appropriate ways? How does the project respond to the challenges of dispersed communities? To the challenges of infrastructure? To local cultural traditions in modern ways? To seasonal patterns which already exist?

Design responses should focus on building typologies rather than forms. The interest is not in how a building might recall the *form or appearance* of existing vernaculars, but how it learns from traditional programmatic or temporal performance. What programs are brought together in ways that leverage local traditions, and produce new collective realms, or new economies?

Projects are encouraged to expand notions of sustainability beyond the technical or the building envelope, to consider social, cultural and economic sustainability specific to Canada’s North.

The projects should address two scales: the regional scale and the architectural scale. (See Design Challenge for further elaboration.)

**Eligibility**
Any student currently enrolled or graduating in 2013 from one of the five participating schools may enter the Arctic Adaptations competitions. Participating schools are Dalhousie University, University of British Columbia, University of Manitoba, Université de Montréal, and University of Toronto. Each school will run a competition on one of the five designated themes.

**Registration**
Each team is required to register by emailing <register@arcticadaptations.ca>. Each team must register by July 15, 2013 if participating in the theme of Arts. In the registration email include which school you are registering from, your names, and your preferred contact email address. Arctic Adaptations organizers will send your team a registration number as confirmation of registration.

**Submission**
Each team should consist of two eligible students. The team should thoroughly document their proposal for Arctic Adaptations at the two scales, on two boards sized 24” x 36” laid out horizontally. **Board 1** should document a design strategy at the *regional scale*. **Board 2** should document an *architectural scale*.

Boards are to be submitted as a PDF with the following filename designation: registration#_schoolname_1.PDF
registration#_schoolname_2.PDF
Schedule
July 15 2013 - Q & A period closes
July 15 2013 - Registration closes
August 1 2013 - Submission due
August 10 2013 - Winner selected
August to November 1, 2013 - Project development with AA design team.
June 2014 – exhibition opens at 2014 Venice Biennale in Architecture

Jury
The jury to select a winning student team will consist of Arctic Adaptations team members including academics, architects, and the Nunavut-based organization.

Prize
One winning team will be selected and have the opportunity to continue to develop the proposal in collaboration with one of the Arctic Adaptations architecture firms and the Nunavut-based organization. This project will be one of five presented in Canada’s pavilion in Venice in 2014. The Arctic Adaptations team will facilitate travel to the north for the selected student team, and will work with them in coordinating their role within the design team structure that is suitable to all parties. The selected students will be recognised individually and as a representative of their school.