

## A UNIQUE SITE in Arctic territory

1



The Torngat Mountains, the highest range in Eastern continental Canada, stretch north of the Ungava-Labrador peninsula, defining the Québec-Labrador border. Rising 1 646 m, Mt. D'Iberville dominates this massif into which the Labrador Sea penetrates through majestic fjords. From it springs the Koroc River, which empties into Ungava Bay, flowing through a broad valley etched into a vast plateau, whose altitude gradually diminishes before reaching sea level.

It is here that the Québec government, working with the Inuit of Nunavik, plans to create *Parc national de la Kuururjuaq*, the region's second such entity. The national park project seeks above all to protect an exceptional, representative sample of the Torngat Mountains Foothills natural region. The park's creation falls under the Québec Strategy for Protected Areas and will contribute to the objective of protecting 8% of the total surface of Québec.

**Développement durable,  
Environnement  
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### *Sanarrutik, a development tool*

On April 9, 2002, the Inuit and Québec signed a partnership agreement targeting Nunavik's economic and community development. This marked the beginning of a new era in creating wealth in Nunavik, based on a sustainable development approach. In addition to hydroelectric and mining projects, the agreement provides for the creation of national parks, like Kuururjuaq, in order to diversify tourism products in Nunavik.

The *Parc national de la Kuururjuaq* project is at a critical stage in the creation process—that of public hearings. These hearings will cover both the requirements of the Parks Act and the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement. The population is invited to share its opinion on the park's creation, boundaries and various aspects presented in the provisional master plan and fact sheets that follow.

The viewpoints and comments gathered during these hearings will be used to enhance the project and will be taken into consideration in developing the park's master plan.





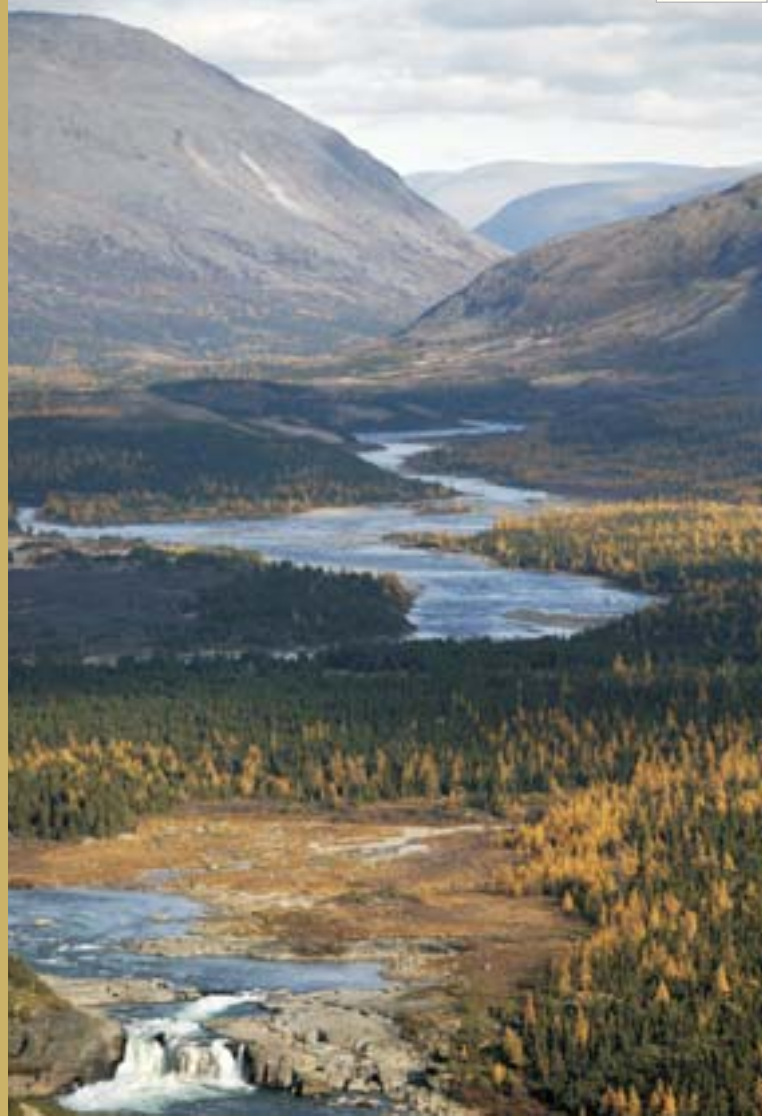
The territory proposed for the creation of *Parc national de la Kuururjuaq* is located between 58° 27' and 59° 12' North latitude and 63° 35' and 66° 05' West longitude—essentially along the Koroc River catchment basin—covering 4 273 km<sup>2</sup>. Only the mouth of the Koroc River is excluded from the project since it is on JBNQA Category I lands (see Boundaries map). Note that 33% of the proposed perimeter is located on Category II lands with the remainder on Category III lands.

This layout makes it possible to properly protect the territory's fragile elements and to define an area that is representative of the Torngat Mountains Foothills natural region. It also offers a greater diversity of landscapes, while safeguarding an exceptional Arctic territory.

## Rights defined in the JBNQA

On November 11, 1975, the Native people of James Bay and Northern Québec signed a historic treaty: the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement. In it, the Québec and Canadian government acknowledged that the Cree, Inuit and Naskapi had definite, well-defined rights, including the right to harvesting. These rights take precedence over all statutes in effect, which means that, contrary to practice in parks located in territories not governed by the JBNQA, beneficiaries may hunt, fish and trap, and set up camps for that purpose, inside the park.

The JBNQA also defines a land management system specific to this territory. It contains Category I lands, owned by landholding corporations with the exception of the subsoil, Category II lands, which belong to the State and on which Native peoples have exclusive hunting, fishing and trapping rights, and Category III lands, which are public-domain lands on which Native peoples may continue to harvest wildlife, but for which their right to do so is not exclusive.





From Ungava Bay in the west to the Torngat Mountains in the east, the territory of the *Parc national de la Kuururjuaq* project presents a vast diversity of natural sites that are outstanding for their quality, representativeness and exceptional beauty.

### Ungava Bay coast

Marked by a meeting of freshwater, brackish water, saltwater and sea air, Ungava Bay features a wealth of biodiversity that is unparalleled in the study area. Depending on the season, different species of sea mammal, such as seals, polar bears and belugas, frequent the region.

The Inuit, a nomadic people taking its sustenance from the marine environment, has left traces of habitations dating from various eras. The Ungava Bay coast is the sector that is richest in archeological sites.

### Koroc River plateau

A vast, uniform sector with little relief, the Koroc River plateau is not, despite appearances, without interest. With an average altitude that rises moving eastward, it is traversed by deep valleys. While its wildlife profile is relatively homogeneous, it is home to plant species likely to be designated threatened or vulnerable and to unique, easy-to-observe geomorphologic formations associated with the last glacial stage.

### Koroc River valley

The Koroc River constitutes the heart of *Parc national de la Kuururjuaq*. Rising at the foot of Mt. D'Iberville and dotted with rapids and waterfalls, it flows towards Ungava Bay through a broad, trough-like valley formed by glaciers. Its orientation and depth have given rise to dense forest stands, creating a boreal enclave in an Arctic zone. It even contains a small population of white birch—the northernmost ever inventoried in Québec.

The Koroc River boasts a large Arctic char population. Every fall, these fish swim upriver from Ungava Bay to spawn in such large numbers that, at the foot of the Korluktok waterfall, the water takes on a reddish hue from the males' striking red colouring.

Although it lacks the shore's archeological wealth, the Koroc River valley is an important element in local history. It is a major transportation route used to carry Ramah<sup>1</sup> metachert, from Ramah Bay, Labrador.

<sup>1</sup> Type of siliceous rock used by the Paleoeskimos to make tools.

### Torngat Mountains

A mythical place, the Torngat Mountains are said to be inhabited by spirits that the Inuit venerated and feared. Local artists have portrayed them in various ways. Developmentally speaking, this sector is the *Parc national de la Kuururjuaq* project's greatest attraction, with its spectacular landscapes resembling those of Western Canada's Rocky Mountains but unique. From Mt. D'Iberville, we can observe the colossal work of glaciers, gouging vast amphitheatres into mountainsides and sharpening the mountains' peaks.

The Torngat Mountains are also home to a great many plant species. On their summits are found an exceptional concentration of mosses and liverworts that are rare Canada-wide. In terms of wildlife, a caribou herd is of particular interest. Apparently confined to the Torngat Mountains, it does not migrate like the George River and Leaf River herds.





To benefit from the Inuit's wealth of knowledge, related specifically to the territory in question, an agreement will make the Kativik Regional Government responsible for managing *Parc national de la Kuururjuaq* activities and services. This agreement will allow the Kangiqsualujjumiut to be directly involved in the park's development and operation.

### Conservation

Like all of Québec's national parks, conservation will take precedence over development in *Parc national de la Kuururjuaq* in order to safeguard the territory's ecological integrity. To attain this objective, park managers will have to acquire knowledge related to the park's heritage through research projects and by incorporating the Inuit's traditional knowledge. Moreover, a program to monitor the state of this heritage will have to be set up and ecologically acceptable practices adopted to safeguard it. Ties will have to be established with the Torngat Mountains National Park Reserve of Canada located in Labrador to ensure joint efforts in this area.

## Development

*Parc national de la Kuururjuaq* development will involve educational and recreational activities fostering discovery of the park's natural and cultural heritage with minimum acceptable impact on the territory. The park's education program will address wildlife, plant life and landscapes as well as the Kangiqsualujjuamiut' culture and traditions.

The recreational activities offered will reflect the fragility of the natural heritage, the distances involved and the number of visitors expected. They will comprise mainly locomotion activities providing access to the park's different sectors, i.e. all forms of hiking or use of appropriate watercraft to travel the Koroc River.

## Safety

Although the activities and services offered will be intended primarily for people with experience in isolated areas and being exposed to the elements, user safety will play an important role in the park's management.

The *Parc national de la Kuururjuaq* project territory includes a range of natural dangers associated with the presence of high mountains, wildlife and a harsh climate. A solid emergency measures plan encompassing prevention and intervention will be set up in conjunction with the Torngat Mountains National Park Reserve of Canada to coordinate action in this regard.

## Local economic development

Devoted primarily to territorial protection, Québec's national parks nevertheless structure local economies. While park operation and management jobs will be created, the village of Kangiqsualujjuaq constitutes the gateway for visitors wishing to access the park (reception, access authorization, permanent exhibition). With the inflow of tourists, businesses may develop, i.e. accommodations, restaurants, equipment sales/rental or activities that are complementary to the park. On this latter point, it is clear that visitors will be interested in experiences offering close contact with the Kangiqsualujjuamiut and their culture.





Since it defines land use, zoning plays a crucial role in a national park. In *Parc national de la Kuururjuaq*, zoning guidelines and regulations will not impinge on the JBNQA beneficiaries' practice of traditional activities.

It has been proposed that *Parc national de la Kuururjuaq* include 7 zones (see Zoning map) defined according to the degree of fragility of the heritage found there, potential for use, and presence of elements that are significant for the Inuit culture.

### Maximum preservation zones

There are two maximum preservation zones covering 47 km<sup>2</sup>. They are not accessible to visitors and will not be developed. However, scientific research could be conducted there with the park manager's authorization. The first is located on the Torngat Mountains' upper peaks and the second is situated in the downstream portion of the Koroc River on the valley's northern slopes. These zones will protect the integrity of a sampling of the Torngat Mountains and Québec's northernmost white birch stands.

### Preservation zone

Most of the park project (3 768 km<sup>2</sup>) corresponds to preservation zoning. On the Ungava Bay shore, this zoning is intended mainly to protect archeological sites. Elsewhere, it will safeguard fragile elements of the natural heritage by prohibiting motor vehicle access, among other things. Development will be limited particularly in terms of accommodations.

### Ambience zone

The ambience zone is intended for less restricted discovery of park territory. It spans 453 km<sup>2</sup> and is located primarily in valleys and on the shore. It crosses the preservation zone to concentrate motorized traffic. It also permits development of shelters and establishment of links with the Torngat Mountains National Park Reserve of Canada.

### Services zones

The park's three services zones cover 5 km<sup>2</sup> and are characterized by a greater carrying capacity. They will contain the main air access points and accommodations. The units built here will be more comfortable and offer more amenities than those planned for the ambience and preservation zones.





The *Parc national de la Kuururjuaq* development concept is based on discovery of an original ecotourism product in an exceptional Arctic setting, while protecting the territory's natural and cultural heritage (see *Development concept* map).

### Visitor reception

Visitor reception will occur in the village of Kangiqsualujjuaq, the gateway to the park. Visitors will receive the information required for their stay and be able to view a permanent exhibition presenting the park's natural and cultural heritage. Administrative and maintenance services will be located here.

## Park access

Park access is the development concept's backbone, varying by season and sector.

In summer, the two main access points will be the Koroc River head in the Torngat Mountains and the Ungava Bay shore. The Koroc River's upstream portion will be accessible only by plane while park access through the shore will involve water travel from Kangiqsualujjuaq using local guides.

In winter, snowmobiles will be used on marked trails to avoid multiple impacts on the natural heritage. Dog-sled travel will be possible, fitting in perfectly with the Northern experience. Planes could also be used.

## Accommodations for all tastes

To restrict impacts on the natural heritage, accommodations offered in *Parc national de la Kuururjuaq* will be rustic for the most part. However, two camps offering more amenities and services will be set up for visitors staying at the Koroc River head and Ungava Bay shore. All of these types of accommodation will allow visitors to enjoy an authentic, but safe, outdoor experience.

Plans include building seven wilderness shelters along the longer hiking trails and canoe routes proposed: four in the Torngat Mountains and three along the Koroc River. The distance between these shelters will be determined based mainly on user safety but also to ensure

a modicum of comfort. Moreover, emergency huts could be built on the summits to offer shelter to hikers caught out by bad weather.

Wilderness camping will also be an option. Suitable sites will be identified along the Koroc River. Moreover, to enjoy a fully Northern experience, overnight stays in igloos will be possible in winter.

## Discovering spectacular landscapes

Parc national de la Kuururjuaq offers vast potential for outdoor activities. For short and long hikes, the Torngat Mountains sector offers many trails with numerous spectacular lookouts. Hiking is not limited to trails but is prohibited in maximum preservation zones. In winter, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing and ski mountaineering can also be practiced here.

The Koroc River valley will be reserved primarily for whitewater activities. Canoeing, kayaking and rafting will allow visitors to marvel at the work of the glaciers that shaped this valley and to enjoy this boreal enclave in an Arctic environment. The sports fishing potential is highest along this river, with its significant population of Arctic char.

Finally, the Ungava Bay shore will offer activities for discovering the marine environment, i.e. observation of mammals in motorized watercraft or sea kayaks.

