Chesterfield Inlet is one of the oldest and longest settled Arctic communities. The Hamlet dates back to the early 20th century when the Hudson’s Bay Company and the Roman Catholic Mission were established here. This is also a traditional or archeological site, once used on a seasonal basis by the Thule people, ancestors of today’s Inuit.

HISTORY OF THE COMMUNITY

The Inuit of the Chesterfield Inlet area belonged to two sub-groups. The northern group were the Qaernermiut that lived and hunted in the Baker Lake (Qamani’tuq) area. The southern group, in the Chesterfield Inlet (Igluligarjuk) area, were the Tariummiut. Inuit used the suffix “miut” meaning “the people of” to identify themselves and to refer to other groups.

Sir Thomas Button probably visited this area in 1612-13 when he explored Hudson Bay in his small ship Discovery. Over the next 150 years, other British ships visited Chesterfield Inlet, searching for the elusive Northwest Passage. Later, American whalers hunted in Hudson Bay and overwintered at points along the coast.

Father (later Bishop) Turquetil visited the area in 1901, and planned a mission. Some 10 years later materials landed on the shore for the first Roman Catholic Mission. The same year, the Hudson’s Bay Company opened its first Post here at Chesterfield Inlet. In the early 1900s Chesterfield Inlet became the supply and trans-shipment point for smaller trading posts and missions nearby. It was also a meeting place for Inuit families who began to visit the tiny community several times a year.

By 1914, the Northwest Mounted Police (later the RCMP) moved their base from Cape Fullerton north of the Inlet to the growing community.

In 1922, the Danish members of the Fifth Thule Expedition (Knud Rasmussen, Kaj Birket-Smith, Helge Bangsted, Jacob Olsen, Therkel Mathiassen, Peder Pedersen, and Peter Freuchen) visited Chesterfield Inlet, from the 23rd of April to the 3rd of May.

The first school opened in 1951, and a few years later the RC mission opened a large hostel. Inuit children from the Kivalliq region were sent to Chesterfield Inlet for 10 or 11 months to attend school. They lived at Turquetil Hall, once the largest building in the Kivalliq before it was demolished in the early 1980s.

The Hamlet of Chesterfield Inlet was established April 1st, 1980.

HISTORIC TOUR OF CHESTERFIELD INLET

Chesterfield Inlet celebrated its 100th year in 2011, and is the oldest continuously settled community in Nunavut.

Several of the original buildings constructed in 1911-12 are still standing. Many of the Mission buildings have weathered the long years of Arctic climate, and some are still in use.

A historical walking tour starts at the Northern Store (formerly the Hudson’s Bay Company), the oldest building in the community. Part of the store was one of the original buildings put up in 1911. This is possibly one of the few buildings from the early days of the Bay in the north still in use today (presently by the Northern Store for storage), and upgraded through the years by the North West Company.

From the Bay, the walking tour takes you past the Mission complex and the original mission building completed by Bishop Turquetil.

Copies of the walking tour guidebook can be picked up at the hamlet office. Some of the buildings have markers on them, with historic photos of the early days of Chesterfield Inlet.

South of Chesterfield Inlet, about five km is Fox Trap Island where you can see stone traps. These were used by the Inuit to trap fox for their furs, using fish bait or meat scraps inside the slanted stones.

THULE SITES

Just outside the hamlet, about two km north, and also north of the airport runway, there are significant Thule era sites, where Inuit lived hundreds of years ago. Guided tours are available.

Ancestors of modern Inuit, the Thule people probably arrived here some 500 years ago and replaced an earlier group known as the Dorset culture. The Thule were extremely resourceful and introduced new technology, including dog teams to pull sleds, and ingenious boats made of hides and pieces of wood or animal bone. They settled in large groups along the shore of the Bay and hunted whales from their boats called umiak in Inuktitut.

The Thule site is believed to be about 300 years old. The remains of several dwellings are clearly visible, and help to illustrate the size of the community. There are fox traps, food caches, kayak cradles (in Inuktitut qajakuviit) and boat or umia stands, made from stone. The site is a protected archeological treasure and artifacts must not be disturbed.
Points of Interest

1. Ship’s Mast
2. Hudson’s Bay Company Complex (now store warehouse)
3. Pig House Site
4. Current R.C. Mission
5. Original R.C. Mission
6. Mission Buildings
7. Site: Theresa’s Hospital and Mission outbuildings
8. Sir Joseph-Bernier Federal Day School (first school; now hotel) and Pitsiulak Co-op Store
9. Nunavut Arctic College – Learning Centre
10. Torquellit Hall Site
11. First doctor’s House
12. Waterfront Area
13. Iqalugrik Fish Plant
14. Victor Sammurtik School
15. DOT Buildings
16. Power Plant
17. First Radio Station
18. RCMP Detachment
19. Grave Site of RCMP Officer’s Wife
20. Water Reservoir
21. Community Cemetery
22. Pitsiulak Co-op Warehouse
23. Health Centre
24. Former RCMP Compound
25. Community Complex
26. Community Dock
27. Noel Nuvak Arena
28. Naja Isabelle Home
29. Conservation Office
30. Chesterfield Inlet Development Corporation
31. Kingnguvaaq Ltd.
32. Elders Home Care
33. Community Freezer
34. Dog Pound Site (fence)
35. Housing Association
36. Rec. Hall Site
37. DOT Garage Building Site
38. RCMP Barracks Site
39. Whaling Boats
40. Hudson’s Bay Company Fox Fur Drying Shed Site
41. Northern Store
42. Beacon Tower
43. Daycare Centre
44. Former RC Mission Residence
45. Greenhouse
46. Mission Chicken Shed
47. Mission Shed, Freezer
48. Mission Power House
49. Floating Dock
50. Former DOT Weather/Research Station
51. Float Plane Dock Site
52. Housing Workshop Site
53. Chesterfield Inlet Settlement Office Site
54. Hudson’s Bay Company Coal Storage Site
55. Inukshuk
56. Former Continental (Alliance) Mission Residence (In Inuktitut, Ajuqiqtuijirlak)
57. Former Health Centre
58. HBC Shed Site
CAPE FULLERTON

The RCMP (originally the Northwest Mounted Police) first moved to the Canadian Arctic in 1901. They set up a post at Cape Fullerton (Inuktitut, Qatiktilik), on the north shore of the Inlet as a customs post to check on the activities of the American whalers, to establish Canadian sovereignty, and to administer whaling licenses, collect customs, control liquor and maintain order. The Fullerton Harbour was a popular wintering station for American and Scottish whaling ships and a trading point between the Inuit and the European-American whalers.

The post was moved to Chesterfield Inlet in 1914, when whaling declined. Fullerton Post was used part-time for many years as a stop on patrols to Inuit camps along the coast and inland.

Today the remains of this original post are still intact and are maintained by the RCMP each year. Weather permitting, a local outfitter/guide can arrange a boat trip up the inlet. In a few years younger than Chesterfield. A local outfitter can arrange a boat trip up the inlet. In August, the white whales (belugas) often enter the inlet and can be seen in front of the community harbor. Harp seals can often be seen in small or large groups along the inlet/coast in August, primarily feeding on fish or other marine life. Barren ground caribou can frequently be sighted on land or frozen-ice near the community or along the coast during summer by kayak/canoe or ATV.

**TOURISM FACILITIES**

Chesterfield Inlet is a short hop (15 minutes) by air from Rankin Inlet, the main transportation centre of the Nunavut’s Kivalliq region. Calm Air and First Air provide scheduled flights.

There is a small commercial fishery established in 1979 and in season visitors can meet the fishermen arriving in with their char catch; visitors can make arrangements to purchase a fresh caught Arctic char from the local Aqigiq Hunters and Trappers Organization that operates the Iqalukpik fish plant. Guided tours can be arranged with several outfitters or guides by boat along the coast. Fishing trips can also be arranged by ATV, to inland lakes for Lake trout or along the seashore for Arctic char. Try your luck to catch an Arctic char along the shoreline or community dock.

**SERVICES**

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<tr>
<th>ACCOMMODATION AND DINING</th>
<th>RETAIL STORES</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tangaq Hotel or Inns North: 898-9190</td>
<td>Pitsukal Co-operative Ltd.: 898-9975</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Direct Reservations): 898-9975</td>
<td>Northern Store: 898-9920</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Toll-Free Reservations): 1-888-866-6784</td>
<td>Kingnguvaaq Ltd.: 898-9103</td>
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<td>TAXI SERVICE</td>
<td>Chesterfield Inlet Holding Corporation: 898-9292</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kingnguvaaq Ltd.: 898-9103</td>
<td>AULAJUQ LTD.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heavy-Equipment rental: 898-9175</td>
<td>ACcommodation and dining</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tagaqiq Hunters and Trappers Organization: 898-9063</td>
<td>(Arctic char - commercial fishing)</td>
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<tr>
<td>DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT</td>
<td>GUIDES, TOURISM OUTFITTERS OR TOUR OPERATORS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conservation Officer: 898-9130</td>
<td>Agigiq Hunters and Trappers Organization: 898-9063*</td>
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<td>* Outfitting and guiding services dependent upon annual license renewal.</td>
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<tr>
<td>For more information about Guides, tourism outfitters/tour operators in caribou sport hunts or guiding services in Chesterfield Inlet please contact the Community Economic Development Officer at the Hamlet Office: Tel: 1-867-898-9206 or Fax: 1-867-898-9108 or visit website: <a href="http://www.chesterfieldinlet.net">www.chesterfieldinlet.net</a></td>
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<td>AIRLINE CONNECTIONS TO CHESTERFIELD INLET:</td>
<td>FIRST AIR</td>
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<tr>
<td>First air: 1-800-267-1247</td>
<td>Toll-Free: 1-800-661-1505</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jet connections to Chesterfield Inlet:</td>
<td>CHESFORD FIELD INLET ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICER</td>
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<td>Canadian North</td>
<td>Hamlet of Chesterfield Inlet</td>
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<tr>
<td>Toll-Free: 1-800-661-1505</td>
<td>P.O. Box 10</td>
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<td>or 1-867-898-9103</td>
<td>Tel: 1-867-898-9951</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tel: 1-867-645-3904</td>
<td>Or NUNAVUT TOURISM</td>
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<td>Fax: 1-867-645-3904</td>
<td>Tel: 1-867-645-3838</td>
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