

# The Hudson's Bay Company

The Hudson's Bay Company built its first permanent post in the west coast of Hudson Bay in Chesterfield Inlet 1911. The building which currently houses the Northern Store (sold by the Hudson's Bay Company to a group employee from its Northern Stores division in 1988) was part of the first building to be constructed in the community. An addition to this building in the 1920s increased it to its present size, and the building has remained the same for more than a half century.

The HBC trading posts in Chesterfield Inlet est. 1911 was the main trans-shipment and supply centre for other posts in the region and was the storage area for the fur-pelts trade acquired in the trade with the Inuit. One of the ships used by the Hudson's Bay Company to transport goods from Chesterfield Inlet to smaller posts in Naujaat and Baker Lake was manned entirely by Inuit. The original HBC warehouse built 1911, is presently used today for extra warehouse by the different sole owners (The Northern Stores). The original Hudson's Bay Company posts, across the Arctic were sold in 1988 by the Hudson's Bay Company to a group of employees, who now operate the Northern Stores.

The early HBC warehouse on the second floor, with its open beams, you can see where the original 1911 structure and the 1920s structure were joined. The sloped ceilings boards of the upstairs also boast signatures of the famous (and not so famous) who have passed through or live in Chesterfield Inlet over the past three quarters of a century.

The plaque near the entrance to the buildings shows two young Hudson's Bay Company apprentices, R.J. Spence, and J.L. Ford, with a loft full of pelts, in 1928. The other photographs show the HBC complex as it looked in the same year.

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## The HBC Post – Chesterfield Inlet



## THE HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY

The HBC Est. 1911

# History of the Community

Chesterfield Inlet was first visited by Sir Thomas Button with the small Discovery in 1612 – 13. For the next 150 years, a number of other British explorers visited the inlet, in search of the elusive Northwest Passage. The history of Chesterfield Inlet posts to settlement dates back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and the arrival of the Hudson’s Bay Company and the Roman Catholic Missions est. 1912. This followed the establishment of the Grey Nuns of Nicolet, Quebec, the first Ste. Therese’s Hospital built 1930’s.

In 1914, the Northwest Mounted Police (later the RCMP) moved their base from Cape Fullerton to Chesterfield Inlet, adding to the permanent population of the settlement.

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## *The Early Whalers & RNWMP!*

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### Cape Fullerton

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

The original RNWMP post was moved to Chesterfield Inlet 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.

# Overview of History

## HBC Post



The Hudson’s Bay Company built its first Arctic trading post here in 1911. In 1920s the post was expanded to its present size. This building is one of the oldest in the eastern Arctic, and has been used continuously as a trading post/retail store for over 75 years.

## Finback crew Comer



George Comer Crew & Finback

## Fullerton Harbour Post



RNWMP Post

# The Trading Post

## The HBC Post

A large mural on the outside of the building provides a photographic recap of the history of the community with brief text to explain the various phases of its history. Following are more detailed explanations of the photographs included in the mural ...

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### *'The HBC Post' — Early Community*

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## The HBC Trading Post & Customs

In 1903, many of the Inuit who later moved to the Chesterfield Inlet area, lived, and traded for at least part of the year in Cape Fullerton, site of the first detachment of the Northwest Mounted Police. It was established there in 1903 mainly as a customs office to oversee the activities of the American whalers.

Although the Inuit still lived a nomadic lifestyle in 1903, they had developed an active trading relationship with the whalers. One trade item was beads, which were used to fashion ornate designs on the parkas as worn by the woman in the mural. Several of the elders in Chesterfield Inlet were born in Cape Fullerton, and still remember their early years at Fullerton, Harbour. They can recall wearing the ornate parkas and learning how to play the accordion or concertina – the musical instrument introduced by the whalers and learned by many of the Inuit along the Hudson Bay coast.

In addition to the main building there are a number of smaller buildings used for storage and staff housing. By 1926 the Hudson's Bay Company was firmly ensconced at Chesterfield Inlet and had enlarged its store to the size it is today. Most of the large building was used as a warehouse, -

since this was the main trans-shipment and supply centre for other posts in the region, and was storage area for the thousand of pelts acquired in trade with the Inuit.

By 1927, nearly 100 Inuit used Chesterfield Inlet as their home base, moving to camps to hunt and trap, but returning to Chesterfield to trade, to meet with friends, and to observe religious occasions. At this time, and indeed up to the 1950s, the Inuit continued to live in traditional dwellings... igloos in winter and skin tents in summer, but as can be seen in this photo of the entire population of the community in 1927, the clothing and materials of the Euro-American culture were becoming a part of the life of the Inuit.

## Historical Trail

### *Igluligaarjuk - In Inuktitut, Place with few 'Thule Houses'*



Historical trail back-in-time



"M" Division, RNWMP, 1905