



 Arviat 

Arviat - from Inuktituk word *arviq* which means "bowhead whale" - is located on the western coast of Hudson Bay. Its former name was Eskimo Point.

The town unites few different Inuit groups, like Padlarmiut, Ahiarmiut and others. It's population was estimated in 1999 for 1642 people of which 94% Inuit. Numerous historic sites in the Arviat's vicinity show that this area was inhabited by the Inuit for hundreds of years.

To the traditional whale, walrus and seal hunting the trapping was added as one of the main activities since the opening of the Hudson's Bay Company trading post in 1921. Opening of a Federal School in 1959 marked the beginning of a permanent settlement.



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Whale Cove

SAINT THERESA OF CHILD JESUS

Roman Catholic Mission

Foundation of the mission

The mission in Arviat was founded in 1924 by Oblate missionaries - Father Lionel Ducharme and Brother Prime Girard. Fr. Ducharme, nicknamed *Mikilar* - *The Small One* - by the Inuit, celebrated first mass in Arviat on August 15th. Ukkutaq, Akpakuluk, Ailitaq and Uqatsiaq helped at the construction of the church and mission. The first mass in the new mission was celebrated on September 14th. Fr. Ducharme left soon for Chesterfield Inlet, but returned to Arviat in 1954 and remained there till 1974. In recognition of his long service to the Inuit he was decorated with the Centennial Medal in 1968.

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Greetings from Arviat...



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Oblates who served the mission:

Fr. Lionel Ducharme, 1924-25, 1954-1974
Br. Prime Girard, 1924-26, 1928
Fr. Emmanuel Duplain, 1925-1926
Fr. Arthur Thibert, 1925-26, 1930-32, 1940-41
Fr. Honorat Pigeon, 1927-1930
Fr. Kermel, 1929-1937
Fr. Jean Philippe, 1935-1936
Fr. Henri-Paul Dionne, 1935-1949
Fr. Jacques Dunleavy, 1938-1942
Fr. Lucien Schneider, 1939-1943 (Tavani)
Fr. Francois Berube, 1946-1954
Fr. Eugene Fafard, 1950-1953
Fr. Julien-Marie Cochard, 1951-52
Fr. Rogatien Papion, 1958
Fr. Joannis Rivoire, 1975-1993
Fr. Greg Oszust, 1999-2003



Former Catholic Churches in Arviat

Few months of life of the early mission...

On a cold and windy February 25, 1944, wrapped in his caribou outfit, Fr. Roland Courtemanche OMI set off for Padlei with a heavily loaded sled and Victor Kritiyuyuk as his guide. He visited Inuit camps along the trail, beginning with *Sikkulikdjuar*, a lake that is never completely free of ice. From his igloo he sent his superior a note that everything was fine and that the Inuit welcomed him warmly. In fact, he was living the life of a true Inuk, eating frozen fish or caribou and sleeping on a snow platform in a bag made of caribou fur.

[continued below...]



More history... [continued]

He celebrated Mass in the snow house with hands numbed by the cold. He baptized in the igloo Elizabeth, Thomas Siatalak's daughter. During the long day hours he heard old grandmothers tell stories and he visited many sick Inuit. He got to Padlei Post by April 15, to be welcomed by Henry Voisey, the Bay manager. Then in company with the experienced white trapper Baldy Turner, he set out for Arviat. So ended an interesting trip whose adventures he related to bishop Lacroix and Fr. Trebaol, who came from Chesterfield by dogteam on May 4 en route to Churchill...

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Father Ducharme OMI

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