

Built Forms in the Arctic 1

The works along this wall explore the theme of Built Forms.

In other words, this section looks at human-made structures, such as sealskin tents, icehouses, inuksuits, cairns and stone dwellings known as qarmaqs.

Qarmaqs have a long history in Inuit Nunangat. They are structures made of sod, stone and whalebone. With their stone bases, and whalebone framings, they often provided a substantiated shelter from more extreme weather.

In her 1971 biography *Pictures from My Life* artist Pitseolak Ashoona recalled that when her family would camp in a place for the first time, either her father or husband would construct an inukshuk and that, “in winter, I didn’t mind whether we had an igloo or a kaamuk so long as we had a shelter for our family.”

Structures such as sealskin tents were often used from spring until autumn. These tents were often stitched by women using the pelts of older, larger seals and were a portable mode of housing.

Many Inuk artists and writers have reflected on the making, use and contexts of icehouses or igloos in the Arctic.

One such person was the prolific writer, journalist, graphic artist Alooook Ipellie who wrote a short poem called “The Igloos are calm in the Camp”, which appeared in the Winter 2000 Journal *Canadian Literature* – I will read this to you:

The igloos are calm in the camp.
The wind sleeps in the sky.
Darkness envelops all the lights.
Not a person walks in the snow,
Nor makes a sound of any kind
For all now sleep with the wind...
And once again the howling of the wolf
Takes over the silent world...