

## Palaeoeskimo architecture

Guest-edited by Sylvie LeBlanc and Murielle Nagy

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*Palaeoeskimo Architecture: State of Knowledge* was the theme of a symposium held from September 1 to 5, 2002 in Saint-Pierre et Miquelon and hosted by l'Arche Musée-Archives. Twenty participants working in different Arctic regions presented papers about their research on Palaeoeskimo dwellings.

The theme of the symposium was self-evident to us, and emanated from frustrations we had experienced during our own excavations of Palaeoeskimo dwellings. We had faced challenges interpreting stratigraphy, post-depositional processes, dwelling delimitation, or simply how to go about excavating the dwellings.

The existing literature on Palaeoeskimo architecture, limited to scattered descriptions in scientific journals, monographies, unpublished reports, theses, and dissertations, seemed unsatisfactory to our needs. The only book synthesizing data on Palaeoeskimo habitation structures was Maxwell's 1985: *Eastern Arctic Prehistory*. Therefore, the objective of the symposium *Palaeoeskimo Architecture: State of Knowledge* was to gather a solid database on habitation structures with specific emphasis on description (*e.g.*, size, construction techniques, etc.), and provide Arctic archaeologists with an opportunity to present their data and discuss them with their colleagues.

Twenty-one articles are included in this volume, organized by geographical region: Alaska, Low Central Canadian Arctic, High Canadian Arctic, Greenland, and Labrador and Newfoundland. With the exception of Alaska, each area is introduced by a regional synthesis (Andreasen; Renouf; Ryan; Sutherland). The articles that follow are in chronological order, from Early to Late Palaeoeskimo periods.

The authors in this volume tackled a number of themes: inter-regional cultural links (Damkjar; Odess); sampling techniques for locating and interpreting habitation structures (Eastaugh; Milne); life history of dwellings (LeBlanc; Ryan); activity areas identified from lithic technology and/or spatial analysis (Cox; Desrosiers and Rahmani; Eastaugh; Erwin; Milne; Park); hearths (Hinnerson Berglund; Odgaard); resources use and seasonality of occupation (Erwin; Hartery and Rast; LeMoine, Helmer and Grønnow; Ryan); social and symbolic aspects of architecture (Appelt; Labrèche; LeMoine, Helmer and Grønnow; Odgaard; Park; Pinard); typology (Labrèche; Ryan); ethnoarchaeology and demography (Labrèche).

The collection of papers presented here is interesting at two levels. Pragmatically, the papers include detailed descriptions of Palaeoeskimo architecture, and up-to-date regional syntheses. At a broader scale, they contribute to our knowledge of early

human occupation in the Arctic and, more specifically, to human adaptation as inferred from architectural remains.

During the final roundtable at the symposium, all participants were impressed by the architectural variability that had been presented. We agreed that greater attention to architecture should guide excavation and efforts should be made to excavate beyond dwellings. Also, archaeologists need to develop a more thorough understanding of post-depositional processes. Inferences about seasonality based on architecture need to be substantiated. We also identified a need for more standardized terminology for terms such as axial feature, mid-passage, box-hearth, lamp stand, etc. We hope that this thematic issue of *Études/Inuit/Studies* will provide a useful tool in the research and interpretation of Palaeoeskimo architecture.