Torngat Mountains Base Camp and Research Station

Vision:
Support and enhance research in northern Labrador in a manner that helps researchers address their needs as well as those of Inuit, Nunatsiavut Government and Parks Canada

The Torngat Mountains Base Camp and Research Station (TMBCRS) is located at kANGIDLUASUk (St. John`s Harbour), a sheltered harbour 10 km west of the Radar station on the south side of Saglek Bay. The station is located on Labrador Inuit Lands of the Nunatsiavut Government. Torngat Mountains National Park lies just to the north of Base Camp, and includes the north shore and islands in Saglek bay.

In addition to its role in supporting researchers, Base Camp acts as a centre for tourism, education, culture, and management activities in the region. There is a strong presence of Inuit from Nunavik and Nunatsiavut, creating abundant opportunities for partnering and involving Inuit in research programs. This includes the kANGIDULASUk Inuit youth program, who`s participants typically take part in research projects based at the camp.

Research Principles

The Torngat Mountains Base Camp and Research Station is owned by the Nunatsiavut Government, which works in close collaboration with Torngat Mountains National Park and the park's Inuit Cooperative Management Board. In order to respect Inuit perspective, values and priorities, researchers are encouraged to consider the following principles in designing and conducting their research:

- Inuit perspectives, values and knowledge should be taken into account to the maximum extent possible
- Provide opportunities for Inuit from the region to participate in the research and build capacity among Inuit wherever possible
- Research results must be communicated back to Inuit in a plain language format that helps them understand its relevance to their lives
- If research is conducted at a time when tourists, Inuit and other visitors are also in camp, researchers are encouraged to make an evening presentation on their work to other camp guests

Getting there:

Most people travelling to Base Camp take scheduled charter Twin Otter flights to the Saglek airstrip from either Goose Bay (Saturdays) or Kangiqsualujjuaq (George River; as needed); information on flight schedules can be obtained from the Base Camp coordinator. In cases where researchers require their own dedicated aircraft or boat they typically charter these from Nain, Kangiqsualujjuaq, or Goose Bay. If your work involves equipment beyond that which can be carried in your flight baggage, arrangements can be made to have it shipped to base camp by boat at the start of the season.

Facilities and Resources:

Researchers at Base Camp have access to shared lab and office space. This includes a small wet lab, freezers, and desks and workbenches with 120v AC power. Many basic pieces of scientific equipment and lab supplies are stored in the station and available for use. Examples include a drying oven, stereomicroscopes, glassware and some standard lab chemicals.

In addition to these research facilities, Base Camp lies inside a permanent electric bear fence, operates a full-service cafeteria, and includes many shared resources such as secure storage space that may be available for multi-year projects. Satellite telephone communications are available in Base Camp, and Parks Canada maintains radio repeaters that allow communications throughout most of the region using hand-held 2-way radios. Base camp also has an experienced staff of support personnel, including a medic and trained, experienced Inuit bear monitors that are available for hire during field excursions. There are a variety of speedboats, long liners, and a helicopter on site that can be chartered based on availability. Also, Parks Canada has established a number of small fly-in camps in the park. These are equipped with a permanent 16-foot diameter dome to be used as common space and for cooking and storage, a bear fence and other basic supplies; use of these camps as satellite research sites is encouraged and can be arranged with the park.

Finally, scientific data on a broad range of subjects are becoming increasingly available for the region and can enhance and support future research activities. These include a detailed digital ecosystem map developed by Parks Canada, satellite imagery, local climate monitoring data, hydrology data, monitoring and distributional data on plants and wildlife, documentation of Inuit Traditional Knowledge, and archaeological inventory data. Further, base camp has been an active hub for research in recent years, leading to a growing body of primary publications and information on ecosystem trends and functioning.

Key Research Themes

The following are key research themes that can be supported by the Base camp, and are based on Nunatsiavut Government and Parks Canada priorities, as well as observed trends and knowledge gaps in the region. While there is no requirement that researchers address these themes, researchers are encouraged to consider them and attempt to incorporate them into their work to increase its relevance in the region. Further, as stated above, consideration of Inuit needs, values and knowledge is an expectation of researchers working in the area, and consultation and communication with Inuit communities is a key component of the research permitting systems operated by both Nunatsiavut Government and Parks Canada.

People and Culture

A broad range of research is needed related to the history, function, resilience and sustainability of social-ecological systems in northern Labrador. This includes archaeology and the protection and presentation of the cultural and human history of the region, documentation of traditional knowledge, other subjects related to the Inuit heritage of the region, as well as application of Inuit knowledge to contemporary challenges such as sustainable tourism and the management of the Torngat Mountains caribou herd. Finally, factors related to Inuit food security, such as contaminants and trends in country foods such as berries, fish, seals and caribou are important and can help understand linkages between people and ecosystems.

Vegetation and Wildlife

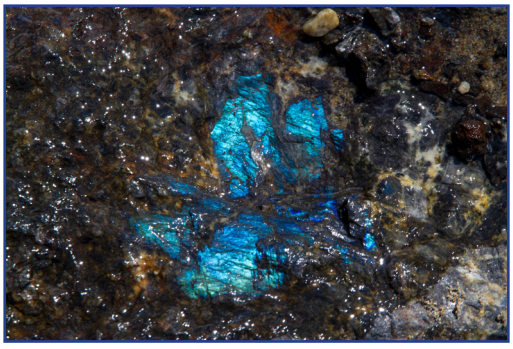
Several key biological questions in northern Labrador relate to the status and management of important species such as caribou, black bears, wolves and polar bears. Also, a dramatic region-wide greening trend is ongoing and has lead to rapid expansion of shrubs and other plants over the past 25 years. This likely relates to increasing growing season length and is possibly exacerbated by reduced grazing by caribou, and means that there is a need for research into potential impacts on populations and distributions of plants and wildlife in the region. Finally, as a poorly studied region, basic biological monitoring and inventory data will support future planning, protection and research.

Coastal and Marine Ecosystems

Information on structure and function of coastal and marine ecosystems is limited, yet changes to sea ice dynamics and other climate related variables, as well as potential offshore industrial activity may have profound effects in northern Labrador as well as the people who depend on marine resources. Key research questions relate to changes in sea ice and implications for human activities and marine resources, understanding polar bears (ecology and human interactions), changes in trophic dynamics and ecosystem function (e.g. potential of killer whales to replace polar bears as a key marine predator), identification of key biological resources and hot spots, and linkages with freshwater ecosystems (e.g. nutrient transport, char populations, and freshwater seals at Kangalaksiorvik lake).

Climate

Global climate change is a pervasive factor affecting people and ecosystems throughout the North. This is particularly true in northern Labrador, where observed and anticipated changes to regional climate are expected to be particularly pronounced, affecting such environmental variables as sea ice, permafrost, vegetation, hydrology, precipitation regimes, and glaciers. Relevant themes include prediction of future effects, climate change adaptation, and influences on people, vegetation, wildlife, and the ecosystems that support them.



Geology

The geological formations in Northern Labrador are unique, and include ancient terrains (formations older than 3.6 billion years old), which provide invaluable information about the processes that shaped Earth shortly after it's formation. The area surrounding the Base Camp is one of the oldest terrains ever found at the surface of the Earth.

Bookings:
Torngat Mountains Base Camp & Research Station
www.thetorngats.com

Research Questions:
Nunatsiavut Government
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This research facility is the result of the power of partners who share a vision, and the dedicated work of many people, communities, institutions and funding agencies

Torngat Mountains National Park
parkscanada.gc.ca

Parc national des Monts-Torngat
parcscanada.gc.ca

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