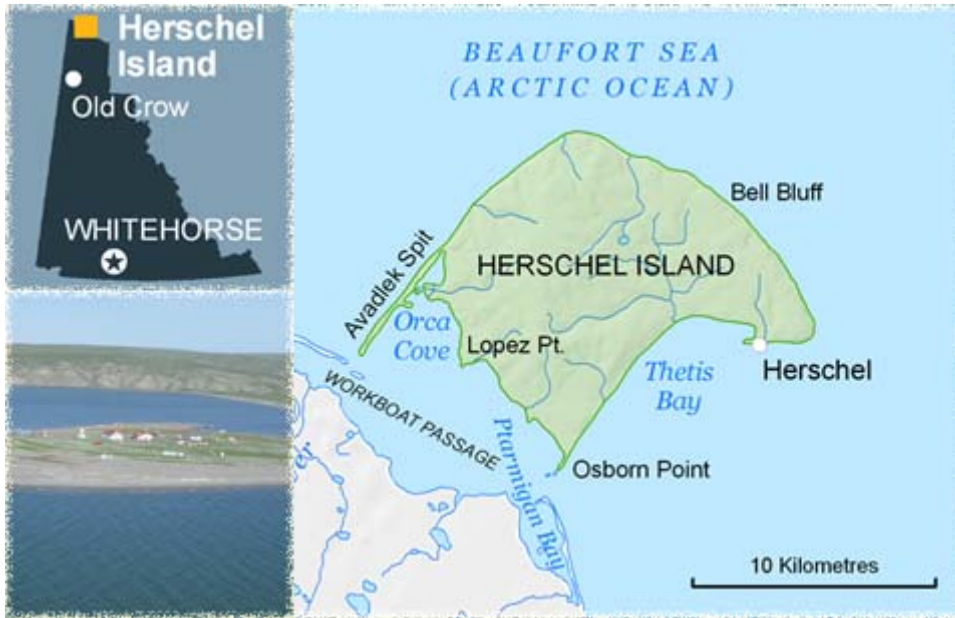


## Herschel Island Qikiqtaruk Territorial Park – Culture



Inuvialuit oral tradition says there were people here to witness the making of Qikiqtaruk. Beginning at least as far back as 9,000 years ago, there have been several waves of people through the area.

Remains of thousand-year-old dwellings of the Thule culture comprise the earliest known archaeological evidence of island occupation. The Thule people had a highly developed culture and built

large villages, some with over 200 people. On the island, their houses were dug into the beach gravel and had driftwood walls covered with hides and sod. Remains of these houses still exist on Qikiqtaruk.

When John Franklin, the first European to visit Qikiqtaruk, arrived in 1826, descendants of the Thule were living here. The Qikiqtarukmiut - island people - inhabited at least three villages on the island, including one at Pauline Cove.

American whalers, who began hunting bowhead whales in this area in 1889, used Pauline Cove as an overwintering station for almost 20 years. The presence of a large group of foreign whalers attracted Alaskan and Mackenzie Delta Inuit and Gwich'in from the Yukon interior, as well as missionaries, police and traders. By the mid-1890s an estimated 1,500 people were overwintering on Herschel Island. Following the collapse of the whaling market in 1907, Herschel's population dwindled until the last non-native left with the abandonment of the RCMP post in 1964.

Thirteen historic structures stand on the spit at Pauline Cove. These buildings are related to the whaling period, the Anglican missionaries, and the police, as well as the Hudson Bay Company and other traders. One of the most prominent structures, the Pacific Steam Whaling Company community house, was built in 1893. Also located at the Pauline Cove settlement are semi-subterranean ice houses, various cemeteries, and the archaeological remains of historic and prehistoric cultures. Yukon Heritage Branch continues to research and preserve the island's historic resources.