

KAPISILLIT – *THE SETTLEMENT*



by
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Kapisillit - The settlement

It is with mixed feelings I as outsiders watch the life in the settlement. I have visited Kapisillit several times and each time I got the feeling of a stagnating small settlement. The technical installations are working. The small shop seems as effective as any other shop in Greenland. You can get a bath in the clean service house. The power lights up the town in the darkness. But still the settlement emanates no longer much vitality.

Kapisillit has been inhabited since 1927. Several centuries before the establishment of the settlement, the area was home to the Eskimos and the Norsemen. Some of the oldest traces of humans in southern Greenland are located in the Kapisillit area. The area has been home for people, dating back to the Saqqaq culture. This culture inhabited the Greenland coastline in the period 2400 years BC to 700 BC. Later the Norsemen arrived from Iceland. The Norsemen remained in the area during the Middle Ages.

Unlike most other settlements in Greenland Kapisillit is not located on the coast, but deep inside the fiord. A previous large stock of cod and the availability of salmon and trout from the nearby river Kapisilik was the main reason to build up the settlement. Kapisillit means “salmons” in the Greenlandic language. The name refers to the fact that the only spawning-ground for salmon in Greenland is the river near the settlement.

The inhabitants mostly subsist on hunting, fishing and tourism or as employed in the public sector. More than 15 percent of the income in the settlement comes from public transfer payments, including pensions. The settlement has its own school, shop and post office, church and service building. In the service house you can take a bath and wash your clothes.

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In the service house is also a workroom, where the local women sew skins for sale to the tourists. Many of the houses in the settlement have now been taken over by people from Nuuk and used as holiday cottage.

Earlier the income mainly came from cod fishing and reindeer breeding. In 1953 The Royal Greenlandic Trading Company established a breeding station for domesticated reindeer near Kapisillit. The Reindeers were imported from Norway and a Sami from Norway settled in Kapisillit acted as a manager for the farm.

The reindeer farm consisted of approx. 2000 animals. In 1966, the local slaughterhouse slaughtered about 500 animals each year. The farm is now closed. The cod fishing is perhaps on the way back. At its peak in 1950 513 tonnes of cod was sold to The Royal Greenlandic Trading Company in Kapisillit.

Kapisillit is a settlement in the Sermersooq Municipality. Like most other small settlements in Greenland, Kapisillit experiences a demographic decline. The population of Kapisillit reached a population of more than 300 inhabitants around the year 1960. After the cod disappeared, the population diminished by one half over twenty years. Today only 73 people are registered as inhabitants in the settlement. The decline is expected to continue in the coming years.

But who knows? Perhaps a gold mine will be located near the settlement? When the people from the Saqqaq culture inhabited the area the ice sheet was much farther away. Perhaps the climate changes again will reduce the ice sheet and new land will uncover important mineral deposits? Like elsewhere in the Nuuk region the geologic formations contain numerous remnants of volcanic belts with a gold potential.



The service house and other old houses in the evening twilight, September 2001



The settlement Kapisillit from the west, September 2004



Cloth and meat put out to dry, September 2001



There are numerous wheatears in the landscape around Kapisillit, August 2004



Double house in the settlement, September 2001



Houses with a view to the fiord, September 2001



*Telecommunication link,
September 2001*



The playground, September 2001



Houses in the eastern part of the settlement, September 2001



*Red leaves after night frost,
September 2004*



Traffic in the settlement, September 2001



*The bell frame,
September 2001*



New building, September 2001



Old house standing on high ground, September 2001



The path from the Pingu Mountain to the settlement, September 2004

Thumbnails

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COLOPHON

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*PDF Version 1.0
Originally Published April 2012*

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