

The development of the small Settlements

One of the major policy issues in Greenland today concerns the future of the country's small settlements.

The overall trends are clear: When the young people get an education, they leave the smaller settlements and move to the cities. This development is significant and can be recognized all over the Arctic, and it also happens here in Greenland.

New generations get an education, and there are no demands for the skills of young people in the small settlements. Instead the young people acquire the benefits of the larger cities in terms of modern conveniences, culture, sports etc.

Today there are about a hundred settlements on the long coast of Greenland. Many of these settlements show a pronounced decline over the last decades and it is difficult to sustain an economic basis for the existence of these settlements.

It is a trend that has existed for decades. Many small settlements will eventually disappear.

This has also been the conditions for the settlement Qoornoq in the Godthåbsfiord close to the capital Nuuk. Qoornoq no longer has the status of settlement, but the place has survived, and today is a collection of holiday cottages for inhabitants in Nuuk.

Qoornoq, located approx. 50 kilometres northeast of Nuuk inside the Godthåbsfiord was formerly a vivid settlement. The site has previously in the Middle Ages been a residence of both the Eskimos and the Norse.

Qoornoq received the status as settlement (udsted) already in 1854. In 1960 the population culminated and 227 people lived here. The cod fishery was the main income source.

But like all over the Arctic waters the cod stock declined, and the consequences were the disappearance of a commercial basis for the inhabitants of the settlement. The population declined and in 1972 Qoornoq lost its status as a settlement (bygd) and was vacated.

The old graveyard in the village was abolished for many decades ago. The characteristic white wooden crosses have fallen for the weather.

Another sign of the time passing by.



A graveyard in the former settlement Qoornoq, July 2010