

The majestic Rivière George rises from a series of large lakes north of the Smallwood reservoir, then flows northwards over a distance of 565 km. Writing on a beautiful August morning in 1905, on an expedition that would take her all the way to Ungava Bay, Mina Hubbard described the landscape stretching before her eyes: “Mountains ahead standing out against the clear sky with delicate clouds of white mist hanging along their sides or veiling the tops. One just at the bend is very, very fine. It reminds me of an Egyptian pyramid”<sup>1</sup>. On maps today, this mountain now bears the name Pic Pyramide. Its appearance is due to the shorelines carved by an ancient glacial lake. Inuit and Naskapis have also recognized this feature, and call the mountain Ulittaniujalik and Musuwaaw Siipiyy respectively, meaning “the area where there is high-water marks”.

This is the territory in which the Government of Québec proposes to create, in partnership with the Inuit and Naskapis of Nunavik, Parc national des Monts-Pyramides. The creation of this national park, the fourth in the region, is another step in the implementation of Québec’s Plan Nord, and will contribute to the objective of placing at least 12% of the land north of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel in protected areas by 2015. Its main purpose is to protect a representative sample of the George River Plateau natural region.

<sup>1</sup> A Woman’s Way Through Unknown Labrador. An account of the exploration of the Nascaupée and George rivers. By Mrs Leonidas Hubbard (1908), p. 223

### An important role for the communities

Although Parc national des Monts-Pyramides will be created by the Government of Québec, the planning of it has been a joint project. First, the Government gave a mandate to the Kativik Regional Government (KRG) to carry out certain steps required for the creation of parks in Nunavik, including knowledge acquisition about the territory and the setting up of a working group. The working group on this project includes representatives from the communities of Kuujjuaq, Kangiqsualujjuaq and Kawawachikamach, the KRG, the Makivik Corporation and the Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement et des Parcs. Two outfitters are also part of the working group. This group was consulted on the park project and took part in defining the boundary, the zoning plan and the development concept proposed in this document.

The Parc national des Monts-Pyramides project is now at a crucial stage in the creation process, that of public hearings. The population is invited to express its opinion on the creation of this park, its boundaries and the various aspects of the project presented in the Provisional Master Plan and the following information sheets.

The opinions and comments received during the hearings will contribute to improving the project and will be taken into consideration in the drafting of the park's Master Plan.





The territory proposed for the creation of Parc national des Monts-Pyramides extends from 57°13' to 58°13' latitude north and from 64°25' to 66°00' longitude west. The boundary was drawn with a view toward protecting certain tributaries of the Rivière George (see map Proposed Boundary) and encompasses a total area of 5272 km<sup>2</sup>. To the west, the boundary skirts the edge of the watershed of the Rivière George. To the north, it passes near the confluence of the George and the Rivière Ford, following part of the latter's watershed. To the east, the boundary follows a line of peaks and part of the watershed line of the Rivière Mitschu. Finally, to the south it abuts an outfitter's operating licence, minimizing conflicts that might have been associated with the creation of a national park.

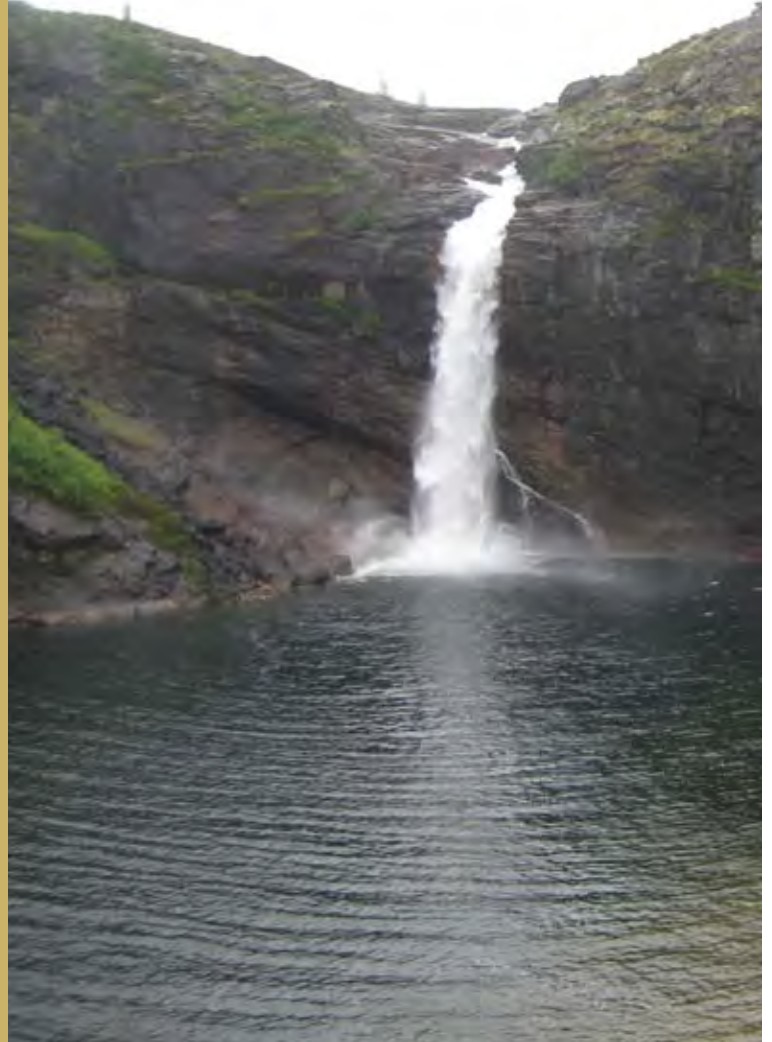
Not only will this boundary serve to protect fragile elements on the territory, it will also encompass a representative sample of the George River Plateau natural region. Thanks to both its size and location, the park will offer a wide variety of environments ranging from the boreal to the arctic.

## The JBNQA and the NEQA

On November 11, 1975 the native peoples of James Bay and northern Québec signed a historic treaty: the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement. With this agreement, the governments of Québec and Canada recognized that the Cree and Inuit had clear and well-defined rights, including the right to harvest. These rights have precedence over the laws in force, meaning that unlike parks in areas that are not under the JBNQA, in this park beneficiaries of the treaty will retain the right to practise hunting, fishing and trapping, and may also establish camps for those purposes.

The JBNQA defines a land regime that is specific to this territory. It includes Category I lands, which are the property of the Landholding Corporations except for mineral and subsurface rights; Category II lands, which are lands in the domain of the state on which native people have exclusive hunting, fishing and trapping rights; and Category III lands, which are public lands where native people have a non-exclusive right to practise harvesting activities.

On January 31, 1978 the signing of the Northeastern Québec Agreement (NEQA) recognized an area where the Naskapis have a priority interest. Although the Parc national des Monts-Pyramides project is outside this area, the Naskapis of Kawawachikamach are stakeholders in park discussions since they used the territory in the past.





The Parc national des Monts-Pyramides project includes four different landscape units, each with its own unique characteristics.

### The Lac Tasirlaq and Lac Qamanialuk Plateau

This landscape unit includes the portion of the territory where the altitude is generally over 500 m. These high plateaus have long been an Inuit gathering place for hunting caribou. The vegetation is typically arctic, trees being generally absent. The physiography of the northern part is completely different from the rest of the territory. It consists of a series of long, narrow hills, slightly arched, that are often edged with rocky escarpments. The two largest lakes in this part of the park project are also worthy of note: Lac Tasirlaq and Lac Qamanialuk, approximately 50 km<sup>2</sup> and 28 km<sup>2</sup> in size respectively.

### The Lower Rivière Ford

With turquoise waters and a course punctuated by cascades and falls, the lower Rivière Ford offers a totally different ambience from the George. Rising from the high plateaus outside the park project, the Rivière Ford ends in a valley dominated by spruce-moss stands. Near its mouth, bogs have developed on the river's left bank. The heights at the mouth of the Rivière Ford offer a superb lookout from which to observe a variety of landforms and phenomena associated with the passage of glaciers or the presence of permafrost.

### The Valley of the Rivière George

A major component of the park project, the valley of the Rivière George completely crosses the proposed boundary along a basically north-south axis. Shaped by the passage of glaciers, in places it has the characteristic U shape of a glacial valley. It is an area renowned for excellent the salmon fishing. The Chutes Helen and Pic Pyramide sectors are especially prized by fishers.

### The Rivière George Plateau

This landscape unit is vast and uniform, with a low-relief topography. Glaciolacustrine shorelines, the marks of an ancient lake of glacial origin, can be seen in several places, but most dramatically at Pic Pyramide. The plateau itself is cut by many fine gorges, carved by the meltwater from long-ago glaciers. Wherever a river or a stream suddenly drops there may be a beautiful waterfall, like the one on a stream about 7 km south of where Rivière George joins the Nuttillilik.





To benefit from the wealth of knowledge possessed by the Inuit and Naskapis, especially about the land, a new mandate will give the Kativik Regional Government responsibility for managing the activities and services of Parc national des Monts-Pyramides. Through the harmonization committee to be set up, this agreement will allow the communities of Kuujjuaq, Kangiqsualujjuaq and Kawawachikamach to participate in various ways in the development and operation of the park.

### Conservation

As in all of Québec's national parks, conservation will take precedence over development in Parc national des Monts-Pyramides, thus ensuring that its ecological integrity is maintained. To achieve this objective, the managers of the park will promote knowledge acquisition about its natural and cultural heritage, both through research projects and by calling on the traditional knowledge of Inuit and Naskapis who use the territory. At the same time, to preserve that heritage, the managers will strive to adopt ecologically acceptable operating practices and will set up a heritage status monitoring program.

## Development

Development in Parc national des Monts-Pyramides will focus on offering educational and recreational activities that encourage discovery of the natural and cultural heritage. Such activities will be required to have minimum impact on the land. The park's educational program will therefore be aimed at furthering an appreciation not only of the wildlife, plant life and landscapes, but also of the rich cultural heritage of the Inuit and the Naskapis.

Recreational activities developed will depend on the fragility of the natural heritage, the distances involved and the number of visitors expected. They will consist primarily of travel activities to enjoy the different features of interest in the park. Of course, activities and services offered will be complementary to the ones of the local outfitters.

## Safety

Though the activities and services offered will be addressed primarily to people who are used to being in remote locations exposed to the weather, the safety of users will be a major focus of park management. It must never be forgotten that the land where this park will be created is a place of many dangers, including cliffs, whitewater, wildlife and isolation. Therefore, an emergency measures plan will be put in place, with components for both prevention and intervention.

## Local economic development

Though primarily devoted to conservation, Québec's national parks have a formative effect on local economies. Most obviously, jobs will be created for the management and operation of the park. And as time goes by, visitor traffic to the villages will encourage the development of new and existing businesses, such as accommodation, restaurants, equipment sales and rentals, and activities complementary to offerings in the park.

## Protecting the rights of JBNQA and NEQA beneficiaries

Though it is clearly stipulated that the JBNQA takes precedence over the Parks Act, guaranteeing that beneficiaries will continue to be able to pursue traditional activities inside the proposed park, activities offered to visitors could, if uncontrolled, lead to some modification in the way of life of the Inuit and Naskapis. To avoid such a situation, the park services and activities will be selected in a way to have no significant impact on the practice of harvesting rights by the Inuit and Naskapis. The managers of the park will be required to adapt visitor activities and services to avoid any conflict with the practice of traditional activities.





Zoning is crucial in a national park, because it determines how the land is used. Remember however that in Parc national des Monts-Pyramides, in accordance with the JBNQA, zoning guidelines and regulations will never prevent beneficiaries from practicing their traditional activities.

The zoning proposed for Parc national des Monts-Pyramides comprises four types of zones (see map Zoning) based on the degree of fragility of the natural heritage, potential uses of the land and the presence of significant elements of Inuit or Naskapi culture.

### Maximum preservation zone

There is one maximum preservation zone, covering an area of 901 km<sup>2</sup>. This zone will not be accessible to visitors and no development will take place there. Scientific research may be done however, with authorization from the park director. This zone is an important place for the Inuit of Kangiqsualujjuaq, and was often used in the past as a camp site.

## Preservation zones

Most of the proposed park (3156.61 km<sup>2</sup>) will be zoned for preservation. This designation will serve to protect fragile elements that are representative of the park's natural heritage, for example by prohibiting access by motorized vehicles. Development will be limited, particularly in terms of accommodation.

## Natural environment zone

Covering an area of 2099.78 km<sup>2</sup>, the proposed natural environment zone is dedicated to less restrictive ways of discovering the park. Contrary to preservation zones, this type of zoning allows the use of motorized vehicles for transportation (airplane, snowmobile and boat) and the building of various types of accommodation facilities. The principal travel routes for reaching the various points of interest in the park are located in this natural environment zone, and sport fishing will be authorized on designated bodies of water.

## Service zones

There are three service zones in the proposed Parc national des Monts-Pyramides. With a total area of 6.51 km<sup>2</sup>, they are on land with a greater carrying capacity. All three have been used in the past for outfitting activities, and one is still in use today by the Pyramid Mountain Camp outfitters. These zones will offer the principal aerial access points as well as facilities for accommodation. Accommodation units built in these zones will offer greater comfort and more amenities than those in the natural environment or preservation zones.





The development concept chosen for Parc national des Monts-Pyramides is designed to offer an original ecotourism product focused on discovering a vast and beautiful land, while protecting its natural and cultural heritage (see map Development Concept). To avoid multiplying buildings, the development concept promotes the use of existing facilities and sites that have been used in the past. In this spirit, partnerships will be formed with local outfitters to offer activities and services.

### Visitor reception

The village of Kuujjuaq will constitute the principal service point for the park, where visitors will receive essential information needed for their stay. As well, secondary service points are planned for Kangiqsualujjuaq and Kawawachikamach. The facilities built for Parc national Kuururjuaq in Kangiqsualujjuaq (garage and visitor centre) will also be used for the operations of Parc national des Monts-Pyramides.

### Access to the park

Access routes are the base of the development concept. Modes of access will vary with the seasons, while also depending on which sectors are visited.

In summer, the park will be accessible by air. The three aerial access points are in the service zones: near Pic Pyramide, at Sanningajualuk bend along the Rivière George, and at Lac Qamanialuk. The Rivière George provides a natural travel route. It is therefore expected that more adventurous visitors will enter the park by canoe or other similar craft while descending the George all the way from Schefferville.

Within the proposed park it will also be possible to get around by motor boat on the Rivière George. Such trips require prudence however, and knowledge of the river is essential due to the powerful current and numerous rapids.

In winter, the park will be accessible by snowmobile from Kuujjuaq and Kangiqsualujjuaq. Such excursions could be organized by local guides who are familiar with the safest places to go.

### Diversified forms of accommodation

To limit the impact on the natural heritage, accommodation offered in Parc national des Monts-Pyramides will primarily be of the rustic type. Besides the facilities of the Pyramid Mountain Camp outfitters, visitors will be offered two full service camps. These forms of accommodation will allow visitors to enjoy an authentic outdoor experience in complete safety.

Campgrounds with services will be located near the full service camps and Pyramid Mountain Camp. They will offer users the basic amenities, including toilets, a shelter and a few tables. Elsewhere, rustic camping will be permitted in most of the park except the maximum preservation zone. Rustic camping will primarily be associated with backpacking and canoe camping. Campers will be invited to choose locations with a durable surface, or sites that have been used before, and must not leave any trace of their passage. Camping sites will be identified along the Rivière George to encourage campers to use them.

### Discovering the park

Parc national des Monts-Pyramides project has incredible potential for the practice of outdoor activities. Whether on day hikes or backpacking treks, the park can be explored by countless routes. Hiking is not restricted to the trail proposed on the map, but is however prohibited in the maximum preservation zone. In winter, snowshoeing and ski touring could also be practiced in the park.

The valley of the Rivière George will be of special interest to whitewater enthusiasts. Canoe, kayak and rafting trips will give visitors a spectacular experience and an appreciation of the valley's glacial past. Such activities could also be practised in the Lac Qamanialuk and Lac Tasirlaq area. The absence of trees in that sector would make for a completely different experience from that along the George.

Since the 1960s when they began operations, outfitters in the area have offered sport fishing for salmon. This activity will always be a favourite, and visitors who come to the park for that specific purpose will be able to enjoy it through their choice of outfitter, be it Pyramid Mountain Camp or Helen Falls Camp.

