



The **QIMMEQ** Project

*A search for the soul of the sled dog*

## Thanks to

Being part of the Qimmeq project has been a fantastic journey over the last 4 years. We have achieved much more than we ever dared to dream. This has only been made possible by the many talented, inspiring and sympathetic souls who have worked hard and participated actively in constructive teamwork.

Big, big thanks to everyone who has contributed to making Qimmeq a success:

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On behalf of the Qimmeq project,

**Morten Meldgaard**

*Professor, Ilisimatusarfik*



This booklet is produced by The Qimmeq Secretariat - Ilisimatusarfik.  
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Photos og layout: Carsten Egevang

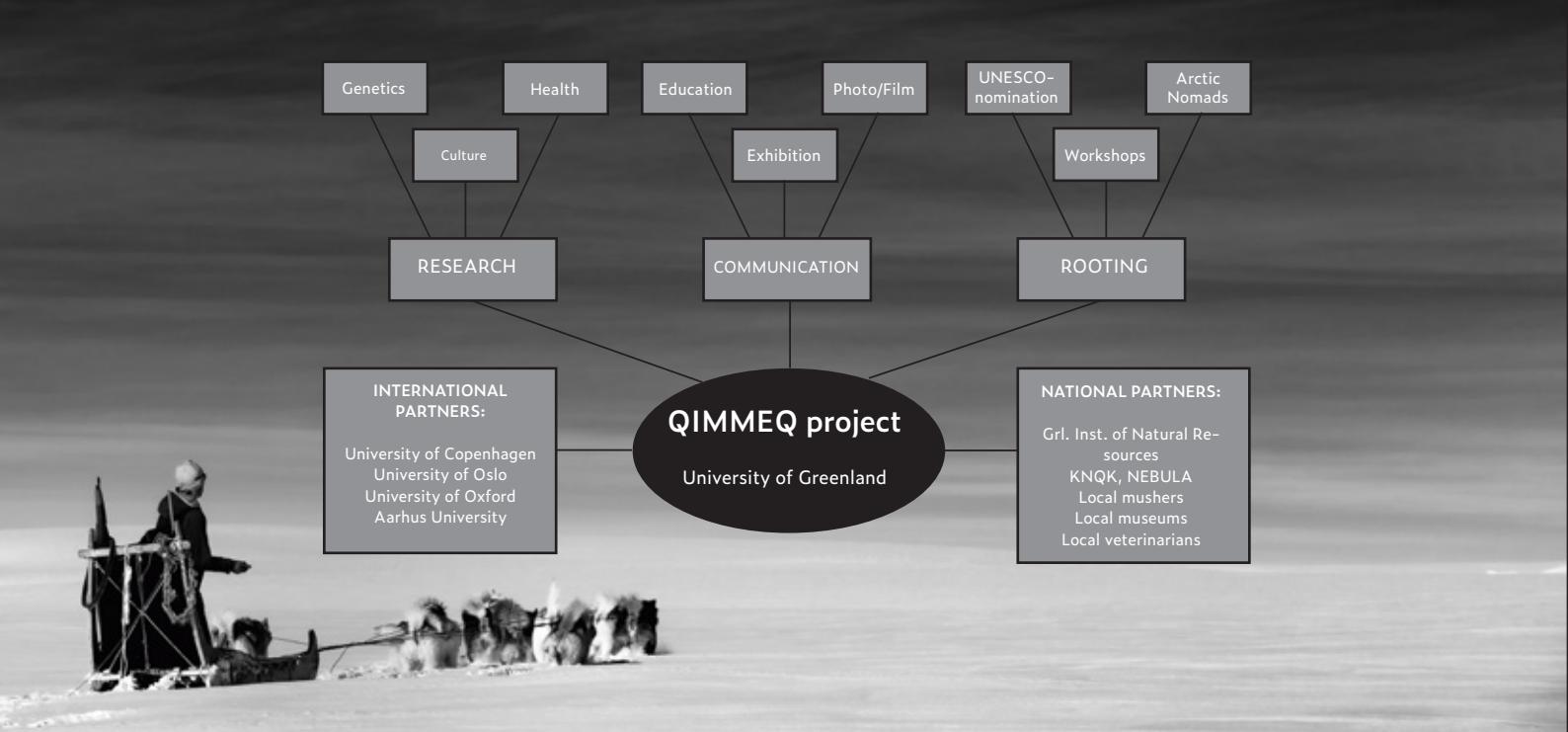


## Background

The Greenland sled dog is a fantastic and charismatic animal. It is strong and full of character and extremely adaptable. One day it is holding a furious polar bear at bay on an ice flow, the next it is pulling a heavy sled full of tourists or meat and fish for the household—and will continue to do so for hour after hour. And on another day the sled dog is running at maximum capacity, fully concentrated on the goal of winning the annual dogsled race.

We practically take it for granted that there will always be sled dogs in this country. But alarm bells have started to ring. In the newspapers, we read every winter about the problems that sled dogs are experiencing: The number of dogs is declining. The sea ice is retreating. Dog food is becoming more expensive. And snowmobiles are replacing dogsleds as the means of transport for hunting and fishing. While the sled dog is a proud and vibrant symbol of Greenlandic culture, the challenges are legion, and many people have doubts about the future. What can we do to keep the dogs alive together with the unique culture they pull with them?

On that background, a group of researchers and disseminators from Greenland and Denmark assembled in 2015 to develop an interdisciplinary project about the origins, cultural history and health of the sled dog. We were all captivated by the dog and started talking about how old the breed is. Where did it come from? Is it genetically mixed with wolves? How can one dog fulfill so many and so specialized functions? How can it physically handle such extensive hardship? How is it raised? The answers to these questions merely led to new questions and the notion that modern science could help answer them.



## The Qimmeq project

Working together, we created the Qimmeq project and established a secretariat in 2016 at Ilisimatusarfik, the University of Greenland, while at the same time working closely with the National History Museum of Denmark in Copenhagen. Next, we started working on gathering a team of the best researchers, disseminators and students from Greenland, Denmark, Spain, England, Norway, the USA and South Africa, all of whom share a passion for the sled dog. We received the financial means necessary to realize our DKK 10 million project from the VELUX Foundation (DKK 4.5 million), from the Aage og Johanne Louis-Hansen Foundation (DKK 2.6 million) and from EU PhD pools and other public research funds and smaller private foundations.

In December 2016, we all assembled in Sisimiut to participate in the important "Arctic Nomads" workshop, where Greenlandic dogsled mushers and politicians discussed with dogsled-builders from Tjukotka, Alaska and Canada about the sled dog and the future of the sled dog culture. Two days of vibrant exchange resulted in 22 concrete recommendations for preserving the sled dog directed at arctic decision-makers. For Qimmeq, participation in Arctic Nomads was a gift. And based on those 22 recommendations, we established the framework for the further work of the Qimmeq project.

We formulated five main objectives:

1. We will use the research for the benefit of the Greenlandic community.
2. We will gather knowledge about and investigate the sled dog, its cultural history, genetics and health.
3. We will encourage, create and support interest and pride in the sled dog, thereby helping to maintain a sustainable sled dog culture for the future.
4. We will share our knowledge and research results, disseminating them to the Greenlandic and greater Arctic community—as well as globally.
5. We will be a role model for future research projects in Greenland.



Through workshops in Sisimiut, Ilulissat, Nuuk and Qasigiannguit together with fieldwork throughout all of Greenland, we have established a good working relationship together with local sled dog owners and with the Greenland Sled Dog Association (KNQK). This trust-based collaboration has been the prerequisite for the useful results and impact of the project.

## Research as teamwork

Contemporary research largely consists of international teamwork, with results published in international scientific journals. The same goes for the investigation of the sled dog. Exploring the dog's DNA, for example, required specialists with very different backgrounds in archeology, biochemistry, microbiology, bioinformatics and genetics. This involves the participation of many researchers, often from many different countries, each contributing with their own expertise. The central research groups in the Qimmeq project have been held together by Professor Morten Meldgaard at Ilisimatusarfik, together with Professors Anders Johannes Hansen and Tom Gilbert, both at the GLOBE Institute at the University of Copenhagen. The cultural history research has been driven more by individual researchers, although it is also part of international networks that communicate, exchange knowledge and share authorship. PhD student Manumina Lund Jensen from Ilisimatusarfik is, thus, a part of an international network focusing on the cultural history and intangible culture of the Arctic sled dog.

## The research results

Research is the engine driving Qimmeq, which in many ways can be compared with intricate detective work that brings new discoveries and new knowledge to light. The detectives are researchers and students from many different disciplines: biologists, geneticists, anthropologists, immunologists and archaeologists working together across disciplinary boundaries. Much of the heavy lifting in the Qimmeq project has been done by three brilliant PhD students: Manumina Lund Jensen from Greenland, Tatiana Feuerborn from the USA and Mikkel Sinding from Denmark. Over the course of three years, the three of them have invested all of their energy collecting samples, interviewing hunters, analyzing DNA and working together in networks together with colleagues from around the world.





Tatiana Feuerborn, PhD:

### The history of the Greenland sled dog

Tatiana delivered her PhD dissertation in February 2020. Important parts of her results were already published in 2019 in the widely acclaimed English journal, *Proceedings of the Royal Society*. Tatiana has carried out the most extensive study thus far of the ancestors to the contemporary sled dog, and a team of researchers has spent more than three years reviewing and examining all of the known archaeological material of Arctic dogs from Siberia, North America and Greenland.

Their results show that sled dogs followed on the heels of the first residents of Greenland 4,500 years ago, the Saqqaq people. Those dogs were different, of smaller stature and thinner than the sled dogs that pulled the Inuit across what is now the Canadian Arctic some 1,000 years ago, all the way to the coasts of Greenland. The Greenlandic Saqqaq have their roots in Siberia, and this is where we must imagine that the ancestors to the Saqqaq bonded with a dog that in many ways resembled the sled dogs of today. Genetic DNA analyses of the dogs' bones show that the Inuit did not take over the Saqqaq dogs; rather, they brought their own sled dogs with them from Siberia and Alaska. This makes the Greenland sled dog one of the oldest dog breeds in the world.

*The ancestor of the Greenland Sled Dog originated in Siberia and from there has spread through North America to Greenland. Later, other dog breeds were introduced from Europe to Greenland. 1. Native Americans (more than 13,000 years ago) brought their dogs with them, which are now extinct dog which are not known to have reached Greenland. 2. Paleo-Inuit cultures (4,500 to 700 years ago) brought a small number of dogs that resembles the Greenland Sled Dog but may have been used differently than today. 3. The Thule culture (800 years ago) used dogs for both transport and hunting and the ancestors of the modern Greenland Sled Dog. 4. The Norse (1,000 years ago) brought dogs to their settlements in southern Greenland from Europe. 5. European settlers (300 years ago) and earlier European whalers, brought with them many different dog breeds to Greenland.*



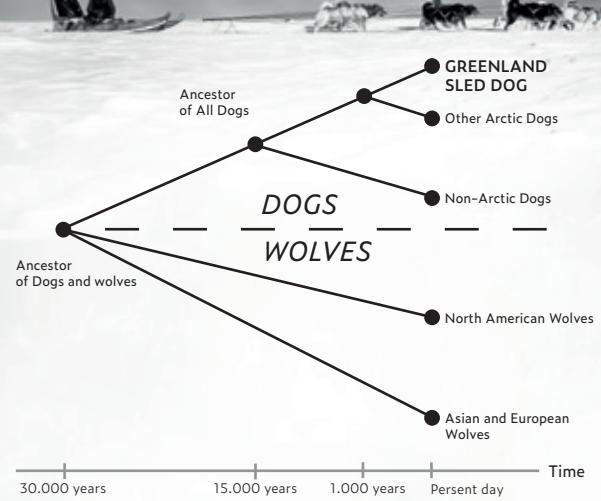
Mikkel Sinding, PhD:

## The origins of the sled dog

As part of his PhD dissertation, Mikkel has examined the origins of the first sled dogs. In an article on which he is currently working, Mikkel has studied wolves and dogs from the entire Arctic together with an international research group. Their results show that a domesticated dog was already found almost 10,000 years ago in northern Siberia, which displayed clear adaptations to Arctic conditions and sledding. These results also indicate that our modern-day Greenland sled dog predominantly descends from these early sled dogs.

Already in 2018, in *Science* – one of the world's leading scientific journals – Mikkel and his co-authors could reveal that the dogs that the first humans brought with them to North and South America more than 10,000 years ago share much in common with the old sled dogs from Siberia. The fact that the Native American dog breeds have since gone extinct places the Greenland sled dogs in a very special light. Due to geographical isolation, the Greenlandic dogs have been protected from genetic mixing, whereas both the Alaskan malamute and husky breeds have been combined to a greater degree with outside breeds. This means that the Greenland sled dog – genetically speaking – is the “most original” living dog breed on the American continents, with a unique pedigree stretching 10,000 years back in time.

*Family tree of the relationship between wolves and dogs. The figure shows how wolves and dogs diverged into distinct species from an ancient ancestor about 30,000 years ago. The figure also shows that all known dog breeds have had a common ancestor – a currently unidentified archaic dog, and that Arctic dogs have been separated from the rest of the dog breeds around 15,000 years ago. Popularly speaking, the Greenland Sled Dog, along with Arctic dog breeds such as Siberian Husky and Alaskan Malamute, is a very unique dog type that differs from other modern dog types.*





*Manumina Lund Jensen, PhD:*

## Dogsledding culture in Greenland

The dogsledding culture in Greenland is undergoing major change. The sled dog is used less and less in hunting and fishing, whereas it is increasingly being put to new uses in recreation, racing, trophy hunting and tourism. This also means that the entire culture surrounding the traditional breeding and raising of these dogs—including how they are cared for, dogsledding and much more (which can be referred to as intangible culture) is changing. It is therefore highly relevant to gather the local knowledge about the sled dog and its use. In recent years, Manumina has travelled throughout Greenland's hunting districts to interview a vast number of hunters and fishermen about their dog teams.

This work is producing an exciting portrait of the different ways in which dogsled culture is practiced, understood and disseminated in different parts of contemporary Greenland, including major differences between the commercial- and hobby-based use of sled dogs. Manumina has already published a number of articles in popular publications describing the central role played by the sled dog in Greenlandic society, and the defense of her PhD dissertation is scheduled for 2020.





### Sled dog strength and endurance

The genetic studies of the sled dog reveal that it has developed unique genetic adaptations in relation to cold tolerance, endurance and metabolism. Overall, no other dog breed comes close to the sled dog's adaptations to the Arctic conditions. These adaptations have yet to be mapped out in detail, but it will be extremely interesting to investigate what has contributed to the creation of the world's seemingly most energy-efficient domestic animal!

One of the reasons why the sled dog is so strong and enduring is undoubtedly that only the very best dogs can meet the challenge. They must perform for hours on limited food, they must be able to convert a very fat- and protein-rich feed into pulling power, and they must be able to rest and recover while lying buried in the snow at 30 degrees Celsius below freezing. The dog is a product of having survived extreme living conditions over 10,000 years.

Studies of the dog's physiology have shown that it can tolerate heavy loads and continue to function normally. It would appear as though what is normal for a Western dog breed is not necessarily so for a Greenland sled dog. This affects the energy composition of the dog food produced for sled dogs and their overall care. This discovery also offers an example of interesting new knowledge produced by the Qimmeq project, which is relevant to explore further.



## Sled dog health:

### *Veterinary exams and pop-up clinics*

After Qimmeq started in 2017, the project was contacted by veterinarians Rikke Langebæk, Emile Andersen-Ranberg and Geoffrey Houser from the Department of Veterinary Clinical Sciences at the University of Copenhagen and Christian Sonne from Bioscience, Aarhus University. They were interested in supplementing the study of the Greenland sled dog with an in-depth study of their health and the diseases affecting sled dogs, particularly on the background of the major disease epidemics regularly affecting this specific dog population. Also of interest was to strengthen the development of the veterinary work in the Greenland dog districts through teaching, dissemination and telemedicine. Qimmeq was therefore expanded in 2017 with QimmeqHealth, which, working together with the veterinary authority in Nuuk, is currently working to increase the access of sled dog owners to veterinary assistance.

The QimmeqHealth group has already carried out numerous studies on the health and diseases typically affecting sled dogs through the collection of blood, stool, saliva, hair and nails together with the clinical examination of several hundred sled dogs from many areas of Greenland. These studies have led to a number of theses written for bachelor's and master's degrees by veterinary students at the University of Copenhagen, including topics such as Dog diseases in a historical perspective, The thyroid function of the sled dog, Mercury occurrence in sled dogs and Parasite occurrence in Greenland sled dogs. Among their findings has been a generally high parasite load and a broad array of signs of physiological stressors. These studies are serving as the first steps to prepare and establish multiple PhD projects in the future.





The veterinarians involved in the Qimmeq project established "pop-up clinics" for sled dogs in Ilulissat (2018) and Qasigiannguit (2019) in connection with Aavannata Qimmusersua, the largest annual dogsled race in Greenland. Here, sled dog owners could have their dogs examined for injuries and disease, which simultaneously provided valuable knowledge to the veterinarians about the general health of the dogs and a sense of the veterinary needs in Greenland. There was great interest in the temporary veterinary clinics, and many sled dogs passed through the knowledgeable hands of the veterinarians.





## Interdisciplinarity

The Qimmeq project is interdisciplinary in the best and broadest sense of the word. Biologists, film instructors, veterinarians, anthropologists, mushers, photographers, microbiologists, culture interpreters, students, authors and many other specialists have contributed on equal footing from the birth of the project idea to the delivery of the final products. To create the best conditions for collaboration, we have had one or two workshops annually in various sled dog towns. Over the course of 10–14 days, we have basically camped together—making food together, discussing, working together in the field and inviting local guests to chat over coffee. We have also worked together on disseminating our work locally in schools, community centers, museums and other local institutions.

## The students

Ilisimatusarfik students have also participated in Qimmeq. Without their knowledge and talent, the project would never have been completed. The “dual cultural identity” that has characterized much of the project is largely due to the students who have been indispensable facilitators for the cultural exchange. Qimmeq has also been involved in teaching at Ilisimatusarfik, and numerous students have been inspired to continue working with topics related to the dogsled culture. The students have also played a crucial role in the complicated process whereby the project results are activated in relation to the political system, both with ideas and lobbying. We have also had capable interns from Sisimiut and South Africa who have participated as trainees in the field and secretariat.

In addition, several Danish veterinary students have worked with the sled dog as part of assignments and theses for their bachelor’s degrees, and the sled dog has been included in the teaching in an interdisciplinary course at the University of Copenhagen entitled, Arctic Nature and Society.





## Dogsled races

The Avannaata Qimussersua dogsled race is held annually in late March in a different town or settlement in Greenland. Here, the best dogsled racers from the sled dog districts gather to race one another. The race is always a massive experience and a popular event that draws people from far and wide and receives extensive attention in the Greenland media. We quickly decided that it would be wise to place some of the Qimmeq project workshops in connection with the race. Here, we were at one and the same time able to meet skilled mushers, sled dog experts and sled dogs from many of the settlements along the coast of western Greenland. Along the way, mutual trust and healthy cooperation developed between the dog musher association, KNQK, and the project.

## Facebook and websites

Facebook is the most important social media in Greenland. The Qimmeq project has therefore also used Facebook to disseminate information about our exciting discoveries, to show new pictures and to receive comments on questions about sled dogs and the culture surrounding them. This has been a success. The project has almost 2000 followers, more than half of whom live in Greenland, and the response to our campaigns has been strong. It is also interesting how Qimmeq has followers in the vast majority of Arctic towns and settlements in Alaska and Canada.

Qimmeq has two homepages, one hosted by [Iisimatusarfik](#) and the other by the [National History Museum](#) of Denmark. Press releases, articles about sled dogs and other material of more lasting character are posted on these sites.





## Five portrait films of mushers -130,000 views

The film medium is one of the strongest dissemination media and makes communication to a global audience possible. It was therefore natural for Qimmeq to choose to focus on film as a messenger to an international audience. Early in the project, film photographers and directors visited east and west Greenland to document the work of sled dogs in the colossal wilderness of Greenland. This has resulted in five short films (7-9 minute duration) in Greenlandic with English subtitles. The target audience is international, and the title, When the dogs are gone, captures attention. The films portray the mushers, who share about their relationships to their dogs, about hunting, their way of life in general and expectations for the future.

Two of the five films have been awarded the prestigious "staff pick" on VIMEO, the global streaming site, and they have been selected for the Seattle International Film Festival (USA), Odense International Film Festival (Denmark) and 42' International Film Festival (USA). The films are also featured on the Air Greenland entertainment system (on the Transatlantic route).

The films have had a broad international reach and at present have been viewed more than 130,000 times. Geographically, the USA (35,000 views), India (15,000), Canada (5,500) and the United Kingdom (5,500) account for most of the views, and the films have been viewed 4,500 times in Greenland and 4,000 times in Denmark. The Vimeo statistics also reveal that the films have reached viewers in most of the cities, towns and settlements in Alaska and Nunavut (almost 500 views) as well as locales as exotic as Tuvalu, Rwanda and the Cook Islands.

*Click on the images below to see the films!*



PRODUCER ANDERS DRUD JORDAN DIRECTOR FREDERIK WOLFF CO-DIRECTOR ANDERS OBBEKJÆR CINEMATOGRAPHY FREDERIK WOLFF  
AERIALS & ADDITIONAL CINEMATOGRAPHY CHRISTIAN MAILAND/SILAS EMMERY EDITORS ANDERS OBBEKJÆR/FREDERIK WOLFF COLORGRADE THEIS C. HØGLUND  
ORIGINAL MUSIC JACOB DAVID/THOMAS HAABRNUKÁKA COSTER-WALDAU FIELD RECORDING ANDERS DRUD JORDAN  
SOUND DESIGN BJØRN VIDØ/ASGER LINDQVIST



## The Qimmeq touring exhibition

The Qimmeq touring exhibition has been designed and curated by Pipaluk Lykke. The exhibition is aimed at disseminating knowledge about the sled dog, particularly to give children and young people the opportunity to become acquainted with the sled dog culture. The exhibition areas in the local Greenlandic museums are often very limited, and emphasis was therefore placed on creating a very flexible, compact exhibition. The Qimmeq researchers have contributed with knowledge and insight. The exhibition is built around five themes: 1) The history and prehistory of the sled dog, 2) contemporary dogsled culture, 3) the amazing physique of the sled dog, 4) the material and intangible culture surrounding the sled dog and 5) local knowledge.

The visitor is inspired to use their senses and given opportunity to touch certain objects, to read, see films, and experience a more artistic representation of the sled dog. Local knowledge can be included in the exhibition by virtue of the fact that some booths and display columns are dedicated to allowing the individual museum to be able to display its own objects, including historical photos and documents.

The exhibition opened at the Qasigiannguit Museum in March 2019 in connection with the Avannaata Qimussersuaq dogsled race. The exhibition has also been displayed in the local museums in Ilulissat and Paamiut, and it will continue to south and east Greenland in 2020, after which it will sail to Denmark. In Denmark, the exhibition is to be displayed at Naturama and Knud Rasmussens Hus. Finally, the exhibition will return to several Greenlandic local museums before ultimately ending at the Sisimiut Museum branch in Kangerlussuaq, which focuses on the living cultural heritage in Qeqqata Kommunia, the newly established UNESCO site. A unique inspiration booklet has been written for the exhibition aimed at schoolchildren and others interested in the sled dog and dogsled culture.





*Click on the book to see more!*

### Dissemination via photography

Like film, photography offers a very beautiful and powerful way to convey a message. The two media complement one another nicely to reach a broader audience. From the outset of the project, award-winning nature photographer Carsten Egevang has played a central role. Carsten focuses on the contemporary use of the sled dog in Greenland and the strong connection between human and dog. The contrasting black-and-white photographs from Greenland created a recognizable visual profile and have been widely used in the diverse dissemination activities that have been part of the project, such as lectures, social media, websites, exhibitions and books. The photographs have partly been drawn from Carsten's photo archive from prior to the project and partly from fieldwork (Ittoqqortoormiit 2017, Ilulissat/Uummannaq 2018) specifically designed to produce images of the contemporary use of the dog.

As an alternative dissemination platform, the photographs obtained during the course of the Qimmeq project have been included in Carsten's other art exhibitions<sup>(1-4)</sup> with photographs from Greenland, or as works specifically dealing with the sled dog for other art exhibitions<sup>(5-6)</sup>.

1. "ADAPTED", Karis, Finland, June–July, 2019
2. "ARCTIC-last frontier", Abu Dhabi, January 2019
3. "Piniarneq", Det Grønlandske Hus (Copenhagen), October–November 2019
4. "SIKU ajorpoq", Nordatlantens Brygge (Copenhagen), November 2019–March 2020
5. "Nordatlantiske dage", Rigshospitalet (Copenhagen), February–March 2019
6. "Klimakunst", Rebildcenteret (Denmark), May–August, 2019

The production of the 224-page book, "Qimmeq—The Greenland Sled Dog" (March 2020) in three different versions (Greenlandic, Danish and English) represents a major photographic work. Carsten Egevang is the editor and graphic designer of the book, which is illustrated with 149 black-and-white photographs. The welcoming layout portrays the sled dog, the special bond between mushers and their dogs, as well as the functions played by the sled dog in contemporary Greenland—all presented with the magnificent scenery of Greenland as backdrop. The publication has text contributions from 14 different experts from the Qimmeq project and begins with a preface from His Royal Highness, Crown Prince Frederick of Denmark. The Greenland sled mushers are also given their own voice in the book through quotations and interviews conducted by Manunima Lund Jensen as part of her PhD dissertation.

## The next generation: Children's textbook and teaching guide

Many Greenlandic children grow up with little or no contact to the sled dog and without learning the art of dogsledding. It is important that all Greenlandic children also have access to knowledge about this iconic animal and the culture surrounding it. Until now, there have not been any books targeting children about the dogs and sleds.

The Qimmeq project has produced a textbook for Greenlandic school children in grades 5–10. The book presents the newest research about the evolution and genetics of the sled dog, the history of the dogsled culture, and the significance of the dogsled culture in Greenland. The book also casts light on the challenges facing the sled dog and the culture around it in an age marked by major societal shifts and climate change.

The book is accompanied by a teaching guide written and developed by Katrine Minddal and Sara Tougaard, who describe the student activities that can integrate knowledge about the dog and dogsled culture in the school curriculum. The book can also be read as a regular textbook—also outside of the school context. The textbook is written in Greenlandic and Danish, with illustrations by Nuka Godtfredsen and photographs taken by Carsten Egevang. The book was written by Anne Katrine Gjerløff and edited by Lisbeth Valgreen. The Qimmeq researchers have produced knowledge, and the facts and language have been validated in cooperation with Greenlandic mushers and teachers and through workshops with Greenlandic teachers and with input from the Greenland Education Board.

The textbook and teaching guide will be distributed to all schools in Greenland in the spring of 2020 and be made available to everyone free of charge via the Education Board website for teaching aids, and a number of books will be distributed to libraries and museums in Greenland and to the Natural History Museum of Denmark.

The Qimmeq project has visited universities, museums, schools and community centers around the coast of Greenland and had opportunity to hold more than 50 lectures and courses. It has been incredibly satisfying to experience the interest and involvement of children and young people. They are the sled dog generation of the future, and they provide reason for optimism that the sled dog is facing a sustainable future.





## Has the Qimmeq project become a model project?

Ilisimatusarfik has been the Qimmeq project HQ, and the project secretariat has strived to produce knowledge and insight for the benefit of Greenlandic society, the Greenland sled dog and dogsled culture. The interdisciplinary, cross-cultural nature of the project has been a considerable strength. The different backgrounds and skillsets brought by the researchers, disseminators and students have provided a source of never-ending inspiration and challenges. At the same time, the diversity has rendered the collaboration flexible and academically and professionally robust.

Part of this success also stems from the fact that early in the project we defined our dissemination and research projects as being of equal value and that everyone contributed to the creation of ideas, implementation and production. At the same time, we deliberately worked with social media, especially Facebook, which has the greatest impact in Greenland. Through a strong visual profile, including short films and photographs, we achieved a broad national and international reach, while the traveling exhibition and textbook were primarily dedicated to the Greenlandic public and schoolchildren. Via Facebook, we established a platform whereby we could include interested citizens in dialogue about different topics—and on the background of the feedback we received, we were able to adapt and further improve our study.

The open dialogue, curiosity and mutual respect have created a strong foundation for the project! At the same time, the presence of the project throughout Greenland and the cultural validation of the research results among the Greenlandic mushers strengthened the anchoring and applicability of the research and dissemination results. Finally, the results of the project have also been applied in the teaching at Ilisimatusarfik.

It is thought-provoking that it is possible to write cutting-edge articles in the world's most recognized journals while simultaneously also telling the story in the Greenlandic schools and settlements. And it is also thought-provoking that these two things—seen in the long-term perspective—are prerequisites for one another. No anchoring—no research. It is therefore of immense value that private foundations such as the VELUX Foundations and the Aage og Johanne Louis Hansen Foundation finance projects that, like Qimmeq, range widely both academically and with respect to dissemination and understand that things should happen in Greenland.

Can we do better? Of course we can! An inspiration catalogue published by the VELUX Foundations and the Association of Danish Museums (2019:10) presents learning points from the Qimmeq project. Here, it is worth emphasizing how it is important to further strengthen the focus on:

1. dual cultural identity and an equal approach, where students, researchers and disseminators are given space—and in turn give space to others
2. anchoring, presence and confidence building in the community encompassed by the project
3. to remember sufficient resources for anchoring and collaboration

Moreover, it is important that

4. language instruction and cultural understanding are explicitly incorporated in the future project planning



## The future of the Qimmeq project

Inatsisartut, the Parliament of Greenland, debated a new sled dog law in November 2019. It was a powerful debate marked by the deeply felt passion and care among the politicians of Greenland for the Greenland sled dog and dogsled culture. The Qimmeq project received considerable positive attention, and there was widespread interest in the project being able to continue so that new knowledge and insight could be produced to the benefit of the sled dog and Greenlandic society. Similarly, on January 2, 2020, KNQK, the sled dog association of Greenland, sent a letter to Naalakkersuisoq Jens Immanuelsen (member of the government), which encourages the Government of Greenland to support the continued work of the Qimmeq project.

On December 5, 2019, the Arctic Nomads held their second grassroots workshop on the sled dog and the future of the dogsled culture. A number of concrete recommendations were presented in that connection. Qimmeq would like to emphasize four, to which the project—which is a university-based initiative—will be able to contribute with knowledge and insight in the future:

- research and dissemination of the sled dog and dogsledding culture
- establishment of a training school for the Greenland sled dog
- establishment of an outreach center for the Greenland sled dog
- development of veterinary telemedicine

Throughout the 3-4 years that Qimmeq has researched the sled dog and the culture surrounding it, we have gained considerable new knowledge and insight. But we have also produced surprising results that deserve further research. In the field of genetics, the results show how the sled dog has an astonishingly high degree of adaptation to the living conditions under which it works. The characteristics and consequences they have for the wellbeing of the dogs and how they are cared for should be examined in greater detail. The health of the sled dogs also has exciting perspectives, which, when considered together with the genetic discoveries, can provide us with new perspectives on the breed, its origins and how it has adapted to the harsh environment. The obvious need for and interest in further veterinary assistance has also led to close collaboration between the Greenland Home Rule veterinarians and QimmeqHealth regarding the future development of telemedicine and the dissemination of dog health.

The cultural-historical investigation of the intangible culture surrounding the sled dog team in Greenland would appear to indicate that there is a fantastic and yet undocumented wealth of knowledge. At the same time, the traditional use of the sled dog is changing fundamentally, and the number of those hunting for bear, seals and going fishing “the old fashioned way” is in steady decline. Qimmeq ought to be followed up by an actual “Learning project in dog teams,” which via text, photography and film could contribute to maintaining and conveying all of the detail of the local knowledge to the new generations, and which can also be used by students and interested adults who have not grown up with the sled dog culture.

The Greenland sled dog has proven to be a prism through which we can view Greenlandic culture and society and the shifts that have taken place within it over time. The situation of the sled dog today illustrates how the changes to which the hunting culture are subjected are extensive and profound—and deserve special focus. Through documentation, research and communication, it would be natural to follow in the tracks of the Qimmeq project and to draw a portrait of Piniartoq—the hunter—in contemporary Greenland.

## Scientific articles

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1. Mikkel Sinding, 2017. Never Cry Wolf: The origin and genomic history of the indigenous Greenland dogs and wolves. PhD thesis, University of Oslo and University of Copenhagen, 1-194.
2. Tatiana Feuerborn, "Genomic insights into the population history of Arctic dogs", afleveret Feb. 2020
3. Manumina Lund Jensen,"Qimmeq the Greenland sled dog - past and present", planlagt aflevering 2020

## MA theses

1. The Greenlandic Continuing Cultural Landscape: An exploration of the symbiotic relationship between humans, dogs and the landscape in Greenland. Stenette van den Berg, Université Jean Monnet, Polytechnical Institute of Tomar, Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle, Università Federico II, (internship with Qeqqata Kommunia), September 2017.
2. The lifeblood of an arctic tradition: An analysis of Greenlandic dog's potential to be nominated as UNESCO World Heritage. Stenette van den Berg, Université Versailles, University of Greenland (internship with Morten Meldgaard), September 2018.
3. Occurrence of endoparasites in faecal samples from sled dogs in North and West Greenland – Ida Højager Christiansen and Tina Angelica Zareba, Department of Veterinary Clinical Science, University of Copenhagen, 2019
4. Thyreoidea status hos grønlandske slædehunde – Bolette Winnerskjold Gjaldbæk, Department of Veterinary Clinical Science, University of Copenhagen, defence, February 19, 2020.

## BA projects

1. Hundesyge hos den grønlandske slædehund i historisk perspektiv – Emilie Sandager Vernersen og Jakob Jonas Jensen, Department of Veterinary Clinical Science, University of Copenhagen, June 2018
2. Occurrence and pathological effect of mercury in top predators in the Arctic – Catharina Bryde Hjort og Mathilde Bach Petersen, Department of Veterinary Clinical Science, University of Copenhagen, February 2019

Furthermore, more than 50 talks about the project has been conducted in Greenland and Denmark.



## Books

1. QIMMEQ – The Greenland Sled Dog. 3 versions (Greenlandic, Danish and English). Edited by C. Egevang – text contributions from 14 authors from the Qimmeq Project. The book is illustrated with black and white images by af Carsten Egevang, Publisher: *Alle alle* publishing. 224 pages. March 2020. ISBN 978-87-971780-1-0
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## Foundations and sponsors

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- VELUX FONDEN: DKK 4,2 million
- Aage og Johanne Louis-Hansens Fond: DKK 2,2 million
- ArchSci2020: DKK 1,5 million

Additional support has been received that has enabled the expansion of some project activities and the beginning of a new part of the project: :

School textbook project

- Den Grønlandske Fond: DKK 50,000

Photography book project:

- Tips- og Lottomidlerne, Grønland: DKK 130,000
- Nunafonden: DKK 6,666

QimmeqHealth

- Beckett Fonden: DKK 250,000
- Agria: DKK 80,000
- Dansk Kennel Klub: DKK 10,000
- Air Greenland: DKK 10,000

# QIMMEQ - The Greenland Sled Dog

A research and communication project from  
Ilisimatusarfik and University of Copenhagen



*"The Greenlandic sled dog is a prism that gives a unique insight into  
Greenlandic culture in the past, present and future."*

Morten Meldgaard, March 2020, Professor, Ilisimatusarfik