



Camp construction is labour intensive and doing it in the extreme cold is slow work.

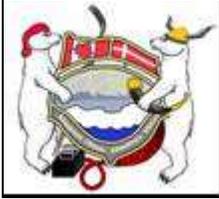
Our camp shelters are semi circular insulated tents secured to wooden floors. They are 16 feet wide and can be expanded in increments of 4 feet. The kitchen is 44 feet long while the workshop for the helicopter engineers is 16 feet long. Each is heated by an oil stove.

Like the “some assembly required” caution you see on most things you buy in a box the shelters come disassembled. Each arrives in several large bags marked “end wall” or “cover 16 x 16” or “base” etc.

The shelters do not come with a floor, so the floor is the starting point. Last year we used floor boxes from a previous shelter that was also 16’ wide and then built the remaining floors from plywood. A layer of foil covered bubble wrap was first placed on the ice, then 2” x 6” studs laid flat and the plywood secured to the studs. Like a giant “LEGO” set, the shelter is built up piece by piece – inserting part A into slot B. A metal base for the roof support arches is fitted together, and screwed to the floor around the outer edge of the floor. A metal tubular frame that fit together and makes an arch is then fitted to the base every 4 feet and stiffening pieces put in place between arches and on the end arches. The flexible end walls are secured to the ends with a draw string over the arch. The cover is then pulled over the arches and secured to the base and the arches themselves. One end wall has a door, the other an outlet for a stove pipe and a zippered emergency exit. .



Photo – RonVerrall



Construction went faster this year because we had 100 boxes pre-made for floors. Each by is 2' x 8, hinged on the end so when they are open each is 2' x 16'. Plywood is secured to 2" x 4" studs and foam insulation sprayed inside. There is a small overlap between boxes so like LEGO they fit to form a floor system. These were constructed down south last spring and sent north on the sealift in August.

We have to bring in all the infrastructure for the camp – the generator for lighting – the wiring from generator to each shelter – the wiring inside the shelters – the toilets – the snow melter – the kitchen gear – food – cooks etc. There are plenty of stories for future updates on how this is accomplished, from drilling holes in the ice to support our “hydro” poles to how the cooks constantly sabotage diets - to how the new propane toilets operate.

However, the other major effort in parallel with camp construction is the preparation of a runway. The Twin Otter can land on skis and so can the DC-3 but other aircraft with greater cargo capacity, such as the DHC-5 Buffalo, are on wheels and need approximately 3000 feet of runway with the snow cleared from the ice. When you need 800 barrels of fuel at the camp the difference between loads of 6 with the Twin Otter and 15 with the DC-3 and 30+ with the Buffalo are significant. The Buffalo is also less labour intensive to load because it has a large door under the tail and a level cargo area. The DC-3 is a tail dragger – that is it has a rear wheel rather than a nose wheel so the floor is inclined sharply upward from the rear door, and each 450 lb drum has to be rolled uphill and secured.

The BobCat is the prime tool for the runway preparation.