The Inuit Inukshuk ($\Delta_b\Box_b$) and the 2010 Olympic Logo

by Nadine Fabbi

The Arctic landscape, writes Barry Lopez, author of Arctic Dreams, is like a desert—open, barren, subtle in its definition and without trees or mountains to distinguish here from there. In order to pass on information that is critical to survival, the Inuit developed a unique form of communication based on rock formations. The inukshuk (inuk=man, shuk=substitute) has been used for over 4,000 years in northern Canada. While rock carvings are popular around the world, the most famous being Stonehenge, Canada’s Inuit are the only people who have used these stone pilings as a central part of navigation. Consequently, the inukshuk (plural) have become a vital part of Canada’s northern culture. The image is used for the flags of two of Canada’s Inuit political regions—Nunavut, the new territory created in 1999, and the government of Nunatsiavut, part of Labrador, and formed in 2005 (see images).

There are many forms of inuksuit each conveying a distinct message. Some are constructed strictly to direct the traveler like those built in the shape of windows to waiting hunters. Although inuksuit do not usually have spiritual connotations, they are sometimes used to remember lost lives. Knud Rasmussen, a Greenlandic explorer in the early 1900s, recorded that, in the community of Kamigluk, when the men once went on an extended hunting expedition, all but one of their wives got caught on an ice flow and were taken out to sea. Upon their return, the men constructed an inukshuk for each of the women to keep their souls on the land—apparently the carins still stand today as a poignant reminder. This use of inuksuit to remember lives has also become part of non-Inuit culture.

In 2002, Canadian soldiers in Kandahar built an inukshuk to remember the four soldiers who died when a U.S. pilot mistakenly bombed them during a military exercise. The scientists at the Houghton-Mars Project on Devon Island (just to the north of Baffin Island) also constructed an inukshuk for each of the seven astronauts killed in the Columbia Space Shuttle explosion in 2003.

The inukshuk has also become a popular commercial logo and used to sell pop, telephone services and beer. The inukshuk, used by Nunavut, is the logo introduced in 2005 to mark the Inuktitut for “friend.”

By Nadine Fabbi, Associate Director
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The Inukshuk will be held in Seattle: Le Film Québecois Film Workshop: Teaching Cross-Cultural Understanding and Dreaming in English Bay, Vancouver, in June. A half-day workshop will be held in French by Drs. Anne George and Bob Balas, will be held on May 6th. For further information, or to register, see the calendar on our website or contact us directly.

K-12 STUDY CANADA had an active fall training educators across the nation. We were particularly pleased to share outreach with the Northwestern Native Resource Center for Canada at the annual National Council for Social Studies conference, and with the Association for Canadian Studies in the U.S., and the Canadian Consulate, Denver, to make a Canada in the Curriculum presentation to 20 teachers. We returned in January to provide 100 6th grade teachers from Jefferson County with a similar workshop. Access to the PowerPoint presentation given there is available on K-12 STUDY CANADA’s homepage at http://k12studycanada.wwu.edu.

The Olympic Logo.

Ilanaaq, the Inukshuk for the 2010 Olympic Logo.

The inukshuk on the Nunatsiavut logo, created in 2005 in Labrador.

Of course, there are fans and there are critics of the design. In this case, some of the critiques are useful in teaching students about the complexity of cross-cultural issues. For example, local First Nations have criticized the Vancouver Olympic Committee for selecting a symbol that does not reflect regional culture.

“The inukshuk is an interesting Inuit cultural symbol, a poignant reminder of the Inuit,” wrote Edward John, Grand Chief of the First Nations Summit in B.C. “The Inukshuk is not a Canadian symbol, it is an Inuit symbol. It is not the Inuit that chose the Inukshuk, the Inukshuk was chosen by the Inuit. The Inukshuk is a unique Inuit symbol that is built has a reason. “It is never built with legs, without trees or mountains to distinguish here from there. Controversy also includes the lack of recognition given to Kanak the creator of the English Bay inukshuk, who was not invited to the unveiling ceremony nor has he been given credit for his work.

Finally, there are criticisms about the Pac-Man-like appearance of Ilanaaq. Some feel it “cheapens” the symbolism of the inukshuk. Others want to know why the inuagood—human form—was used since it is the least common style of Inuit rock formations. Peter Irriy, a former Nunavut commissioner, says that each inukshuk that is built has a reason. “It is never built with legs, arms and a head”—why weren’t the Inuit consulted?”

We look forward to meeting more of you through our outreach-related activities!

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Inukshuk

The inukshuk on the flag of Nunavut, the Dart territory created in 1999.
**Presentations and Displays on Canada this Spring**

**Washington State National History Day**

- **Taking a Stand in History: People, Ideas, Events**
  - **Saturday, May 6, 2006** - Green River Community College, Auburn, WA
  - **Website:** www.washingtonhistory.org/wshd/education/history-day/index.htm

  Awardees given to winners, including the “Canadian History Award” sponsored by K-12 STUDY CANADA, the America–America Society and the Canadian Consulate General, Seattle, for projects in the junior and senior categories that include Canada. Winners in each category receive $100 for individual submissions or $50 per student for group submissions. The theme for 2007 will be Triumph and Tragedy in History.

**Annual STUDY CANADA Summer Institute for K-12 Educators**

- **The 2006 British Columbia Experience:** From the Five Themes of Geography to the 2010 Olympics
  - **Sunday, June 25 – Friday, June 30, 2003** in Vancouver and Whistler, B.C., Canada

  Cost: $500 in-state/$530 out-of-state for 3 credit hrs/40 clock hrs
  Travel support is still available – $100-$300 is distributed with registration on a rolling basis

  **Registration Deadline:** April 1, 2006 (Note: Transportation to/from Vancouver is not included)

  This six-day intensive survey course, directed by Dr. Dan Alper, Director of the Center for Canadian-American Studies at Western Washington University, provides a strong foundation for teaching Canada and enhancing its inclusion in the social studies curriculum. Expert instruction is given by distinguished speakers from Canada and the United States and participants experience Canada’s culture firsthand while staying two nights at the Delta Suites Hotel in Vancouver and 3 nights at the Crystal Lodge in Whistler, BC.

  Teachers receive a program binder of session-related materials as well as the popular textbook, CANADA: Northern Neighbor (2nd Edition), CD-ROMs, atlases, and other classroom resources. The draft agenda will soon be available online and limited scholarships are shared unless a supplemental fee of $400 for private room or $500 and transportation between Vancouver–Whistler; hotel rooms are not included unless a supplemental fee of $400 for private room or $500 for non-registered companion is paid.

  **Books on the Olympics**

  - **Freeze Frame: A Photographic History of the Olympic Games** by Roy Macgregor and Sue Macy. (National Geographic, 2005) 96 Pages; Grades 4-9.
  - **The Olympic Dream Curriculum Guide** - Grades 3-4; 80 Pages. Bring the Olympic spirit to the classroom there!

  **K-12 STUDY CANADA** is a quarterly publication of the Pacific Northwest National Resource Center for Canada (NRCC) - a joint venture of the Canadian Studies Center, Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies, University of Washington and the Center for Canadian-American Studies, Western Washington University. The NRCC offers quarterly workshops on specific Canadian topics; the annual, week-long STUDY CANADA seminar held the last week of June, and an extensive Resource Library for the use of local education. The NRCC is funded by a Title VI Grant from the U.S. Department of Education and an annual Program Enhancement Grant from the Canadian Embassy, Washington, D.C.


  “A marvelous resource” according to Newsweek, this book offers comprehensive results, statistics, and records with photographs and the stories behind the events that will fascinate students.

  **Osborne and Natalie Pope Boyce (Random House Books for Young Readers, 2004). Grades 4-6 ISBN: 0756610834.** Although much information is inevitably left out, this book captivates readers with its visual survey of the history and traditions of the Olympics, highlighting memorable events from ancient Greece to the present day.

  **Olympic History Timeline** @ www.musarium.com/kodal/olympics/olympichistory

  **Teaching Guide to the Olympic Games** @ www.olympics.org.uk/olympic_pack.pdf

  **Elementary Printouts & Activities** @ www.enchantedlearning.com/olympics

  **Olympic Games Primer (and Curriculum Guides)** @ www.aafa.org/olc/primer Frmst.htm

  **Beijing 2008 Summer Olympic Games** @ http://en.beijing2008.com