

Protecting the authenticity and integrity of inuksuit within the arctic milieu

Protéger l'authenticité et l'intégrité des inuksuit dans le milieu arctique

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Résumé de l'article

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Cet article explore l'héritage des cairns de pierres connus en inuktitut sous le nom de *inuksuit* — des structures intrigantes, construites par les Inuit depuis les 4 000 dernières années, qui sont porteuses de messages concernant le paysage, l'orientation et l'histoire des lieux. Bien que les inuksuit semblent être des artefacts d'une aire révolue, ils ont survécu jusqu'au XXI^e siècle, malgré les changements dramatiques qui ont affecté plusieurs facettes de la vie traditionnelle des Inuit. Les inuksuit restent des empreintes solidifiées à même le paysage, marquant des routes anciennes et contemporaines de navigation. Ce sont des enseignes qui convergent pour former des cartes. La force et l'héritage que déploient les inuksuit sur le paysage pourraient potentiellement disparaître à cause des développements miniers et hydroélectriques qui sont prévus et qui consommeront encore plus de territoire arctique. De plus, certaines formes particulières d'inuksuit sont maintenant commercialisées et menacent de corrompre et de détourner la fonction originale des inuksuit. La conservation des *inuksuit* est donc essentielle puisqu'ils représentent un des rares éléments tangibles de la société inuit qui continue de fonctionner dans son cadre d'origine.

Abstract: Protecting the authenticity and integrity of inuksuit within the arctic milieu

This paper explores the legacy of the stone cairn beacons known as *inuksuit* — intriguing stone formations built by the Inuit for the last 4000 years that describe messages about landscape, convey messages about way-finding and communicate stories about place. Although inuksuit appear as ancient artefacts of a by-gone era, they have survived well into the twenty-first century, withstanding the changes that have dramatically impacted other traditional facets of Inuit life. Inuksuit remain as solidified fingerprints on the landscape, marking ancient and modern navigation routes. They are signs in themselves and signs that converge to form maps. The power and legacy inuksuit exert over the landscape is, however, potentially at risk from mining and hydro-electricity developments that are planned to consume further areas of the Arctic. Moreover, particular marketed forms of inuksuit threaten to taint and avert the original inuksuit function. A case for preserving inuksuit is indeed strong, and perhaps quite necessary considering they are one of the few remaining tangible fabrics of Inuit society that continue to function within an original setting.

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Introduction

Canadian Inuit have inhabited the inland and coastal regions of the Arctic for the last 4000 years, scattered from the shores of Hudson Bay and Ungava Bay to the Western edge of Greenland and Alaska (McGhee 1984). The physical geography of these areas ranges immensely, from fjords, glaciers, lakes, rivers and mountains to slightly undulating terrain devoid of distinguishable features. Winters are harsh, long and bitterly cold; summers are cool, yet colourful, as the bleak snow-laden terrain gives way to the vibrancy of berry producing ground covers, orange lichens and wildflowers.

It is upon this landscape that the foraging Inuit learned to interpret and embody the environment around them in the forms of customs, religion, law and education. Through adaptation, perseverance and acquired knowledge about the land, the Inuit successfully travelled vast distances across it using a combination of tangible and intangible navigation techniques. Depending on the weather, season, or time of day, the Inuit were able to way-find using cognitive maps, celestial bodies, natural features and modified landscape forms.

One such form made by Inuit to convey navigational messages is known as *inuksuk* or *inuksuk* (plural: *inuksuit*) — purpose built markers made from dry stacked stones, driftwood or bones. To the uninformed, inuksuit (Figure 1) appear as just a pile of rocks adorning a featureless landscape, but to those who can decipher the rock formations, much more is revealed. To the Inuit, inuksuit are objects of veneration — they are embedded in the roots of Inuit society within songs, shamanism, myths, legends and stories. Archaeological research speculates that some inuksuit were built during the Dorset era, around 2000 BC (Hallendy 1997: 43). Inuksuit continue to be re-erected and new ones constructed, affirming their functional capacity as navigation beacons in the twenty-first century. They stand as an historical legacy and reminder of ancestral relationships with the land.

In recent times, the inuksuk has rapidly emerged as the unofficial symbol of the Arctic — the result of steady tourism marketing campaigns by Inuit, pan-Inuit organizations and non-indigenous groups. The increased attention inuksuit receive through marketing is not necessarily adverse, but the way they are portrayed and displaced outside the arctic context may distort their traditional function. This paper examines the authentic and marketed forms of inuksuit, and highlights some of the current preservation strategies used to protect elements of aboriginal cultural landscapes such as inuksuit.

Inuksuit

The term inuksuk is a derivative of the Inuktitut (eastern Canadian Inuit language) morphemes, *Inuk* ("human being" *Inuit*, pl.) and *-suk* ("to act in the capacity of" *-suit*, pl.) (Hallendy 1992). The combination of these morphemes forms inuksuk (Baffin Island form), which means, "which acts in the capacity of a human" (Hallendy 1992, 2000; Lewis 1966). The spelling of the word varies slightly throughout the Arctic, such

as the Nunavik (Arctic Quebec) version *inutsuk*, and the Igloolik version *inuksugaq* (plural: *inuksugait*) (MacDonald 2000: 188). Mary Wallace (1999: 15) posits that inuksuit are revered and charged with humanistic characteristics because: "An inuksuk is strongly connected to the land; it is built on the land, it is made of the land and it tells of the land." In support of the inherent connection between inuksuit and the land, arctic researcher Norman Hallendy (1992: 9) writes that:

[...] Whether they symbolised their makers, acted in their capacity, or were the objects of veneration, inuksuit functioned as semoliths — messages created by the arrangements of stones. They were an integral part of the hunter's language, and endure as indelible signatures on the arctic landscape.

Inuksuit were reliable message centres. To the travelling hunter, inuksuit were a welcome sight; some described the course to follow, others pointed to good hunting and fishing areas and some marked where food was cached. They provided purposeful information and assistance to those who knew how to read their forms.

Inuksuit appear throughout the Arctic in varying shapes and forms, ranging from 0.5-2 metres high to 2 metres across. Unusual concentrations of between 100-200 inuksuit are located within a few hectares at Inuksualait, Southwest Baffin Island, Nunavut (Hallendy 1997). Many prominent inuksuit also feature along the shores and in the interior between Hudson Bay and Ungava Bay in Nunavik. Upon a recent field trip to Nunavik for this paper, it was noted that upon most hilltops near Inuit villages stands an inuksuk. Inuksuit are signposts, landmarks, beacons and markers, yet at the same time they are iconic and symbolic figures — they often describe historical attributes of local settings. An inuksuk positioned on the ridge top of the Inuit coastal village Quaqtuq (Figure 2) for instance, tells of how the area was once an ideal place to camp throughout the year and especially for refuge in autumn.

Navigating with inuksuit

Inuksuit were by no means the primary or sole navigational aid. Other traditional techniques relied upon include: the shape of the wind driven snow (*sastrugi*; small ridges of hard snow) and prevailing winds; the fluorescent bands of the Northern Lights (*Aurora borealis*); the position of the sun and moon; the relationship and arrangement of stars (the Pleiades, *Ursa Major*, Orion); and landscape features such as boulders, rivers, fjords, beaches and mountains (Fortescue 1988; MacDonald 2000; Pelly 1991; Spink and Moodie 1972). The travelling Inuit frequently used "cognitive maps" — a library of accumulated images and events forged through repetitive travel, experience and interaction with the land (Tuan 1979; Lynch 1960).

Today however, navigation on the tundra is performed much differently. Customary techniques have succumbed to the use of modern navigation equipment such as the Global Positioning System (GPS), radar and topographic maps, and to some extent, communication towers, radio masts, community lights and weather stations



Figure 1. Large Inuksuk on Baffin Island, Nunavut, c. 1970. Photo by Prof. Peter Jacobs, Université de Montréal.



Figure 2. Inuksuit on ridge top near the Inuit village Quaqtuq, Nunavut, 2000. Described to author by Inuit elder David Okpik as indicating a safe place to make camp. Photo by the author.

have replaced the function of inuksuit. Regardless of the nature of erosion and pressures undermining the traditional use of inuksuit, they are an integral component within the Inuit navigational package.

During the *Fifth Thule Expedition 1921-24*, arctic explorer Therkel Mathiassen (1928: 97) discovered that inuksuit were used frequently by Inuit to mark routes between Cape Wilson, Usugarssuk, Iglulik and Repulse Bay. He reported that Inuit rarely went off course using the cairns as guides.

Inuksuit were not only spaced out as markers across hilltops, riverbanks and valleys, but they were also grouped together to describe messages and stories of landscape. John MacDonald's (2000) insightful research of the Igloodik region (Melville Peninsula) revealed that *inuksugait* (a form of inuksuit) were built to mark the locations of caribou meat caches within gorges. Inuit hunter Noah Piugaattuk described to MacDonald (2000: 190) that, "an inuksugaq would be erected on a rise not far from the cache. A pointer would be set on top of the inuksugaq pointing in the direction of the cache. In this way it would be known exactly where the cache was situated should it be buried under the snow when they returned to retrieve it in winter time." These markers (Figure 3) were built to stand as tall as human figures so they could be seen from great distances (Hallendy 1985).

Some authentic inuksuit types

According to Hallendy (1992), the twenty-four types and arrangements of inuksuit known to exist can be categorised into three sets: (1) distinct natural objects, (2) placed, shaped or constructed objects and (3) placement and arrangement of inuksuit. Hamelin (1956: 13) offers a condensed version of classification, suggesting "the pebble monuments" comprise of eight types, although he argues only five types (i-v) conform to the "real" inuksuk form: (i) a small pebble on a big pebble, (ii) many rocks on a big one, (iii) a big rock and small rock, (iv) pyramids of stone, (v) pyramids build by explorers, (vi) monoliths that represent bears, seals and wild dogs, (vii) complex stones (e.g. a woman thinking) and, (viii) a wall of stone.

The *niungvaliruluit* inuksuit (Figure 4) as described by Hallendy (1985: 32) consisted of vertical and horizontal stones arranged to form a window. Travellers were guided along a route by looking through the window towards the next inuksuit. One may speculate that the "window" was a way of reducing the scale of the arctic labyrinth — a porthole from which a system of navigation emerges. Another directional inuksuk called *tikkuutiit* (Figure 5), built of tall rocks or sticks, was erected by hunters to remind other travelling parties of dangerous areas to avoid and safe passages to follow.

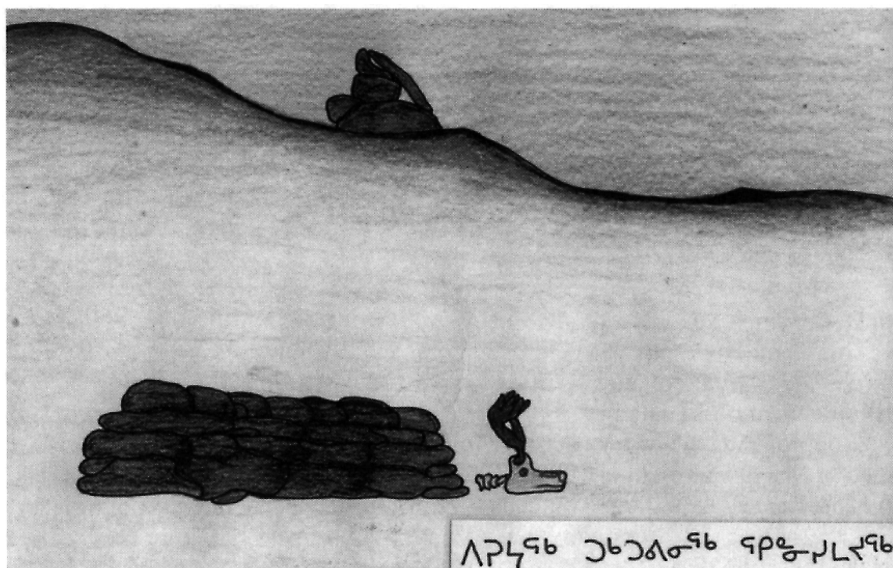


Figure 3. *Inuksugait* pointer marking direction to a cache. Drawn by anonymous Isummasaqvik School student, Quaqtan, March 1999.



Figure 4. *Niungvaliruluit* inuksuit mark a navigation route across the landscape. Drawn by anonymous Isummasaqvik School student, Quaqtan, March 1999.

Respected hunter and late Inuit elder Taamusi Qumaq remarked that inuksuit known as *tikkuutiit* pointers were built against shorelines to mark ideal fishing grounds:

[...] Our ancestors used to put pointers [near lakes] for us to know whether there are fish in any lakes [...] you may find two rocks pointing exactly where to make your fishing hole on the lake. That is where the fishing is good [...]. The Elders not only made these pointers for themselves, but also for their children and others who may come to the lake to go fishing [...]. If you can find those pointers on the shores of lakes, then you will know exactly where to make your fishing hole (in Hallendy 1990: 2).

Qaujisarialik inuksuit were erected to mark dangerous crossing places, rough terrain or shallow water (Hallendy 1992: 17). Inuksuit were often placed on islands where the ice was known to thin rapidly in early spring. Lewis (1966: 86) reports that his Inuit travelling companion, Kiakshuk, erected such an inuksuk in the Cape Dorset area to convey to others the arduous and dangerous journey involved in crossing the Hudson Strait to Ivujivik.

Inuksuit were also used for hunting caribou where river systems and lakes narrow. A caribou fence, known as *aulaqquat* ("scarecrow, bogeyman, flag") was erected to frighten and confuse the animals (Hallendy 2000: 116). An illustration of *aulaqquat* (Figure 6) by Tuumasi Kudluk from Kangirsuk describes how the hunt was performed. As the caribou swam through the channel, hunters would harpoon them from their kayaks and as the caribou proceeded onto land, hunters would leap out from behind the stones and spear them (Stefánsson 1922: 401-402).

Inuksuit were held in such high regard as a navigation saviour that, after a period of time, songs were created to celebrate them. Hallendy (1992) reports that some old inuksuit were described in *aja-jait* songs — songs that acted as spoken maps.

It is believed that some inuksuit possessed spiritual powers or were associated with shamanism (Hallendy 2000; Hamelin 1956; Lewis 1966). Notwithstanding the validity of these findings, it is interesting to know that Taamusi Qumaq (who was from Nunavik) replied to a questionnaire for Hallendy (1990) that he had never heard his grandfather or other elders talk about inuksuit having spirits in Quebec. He did, however, mention in the same interview that inuksuit were so revered that he would not even think of touching them.

The way in which the Chukchi people of northern Russia reacted to foreigners constructing stone cairns on their shoreline supports the notion that perhaps inuksuit were ascribed spiritual meaning. When the crew of the icebreaker *Sibiriakov* built cairns for identification marks on the shore in 1932, they were soon destroyed by the Chukchi people because they believed such marks would scare away seals (Stefánsson 1945: 497). Moreover, some inuksuit were built to commemorate events, to consume time or mark special occasions. At Kamigluk, inuksuit were built to house the souls of many Netsilik Eskimo women who drowned tragically at sea (Rasmussen 1967).

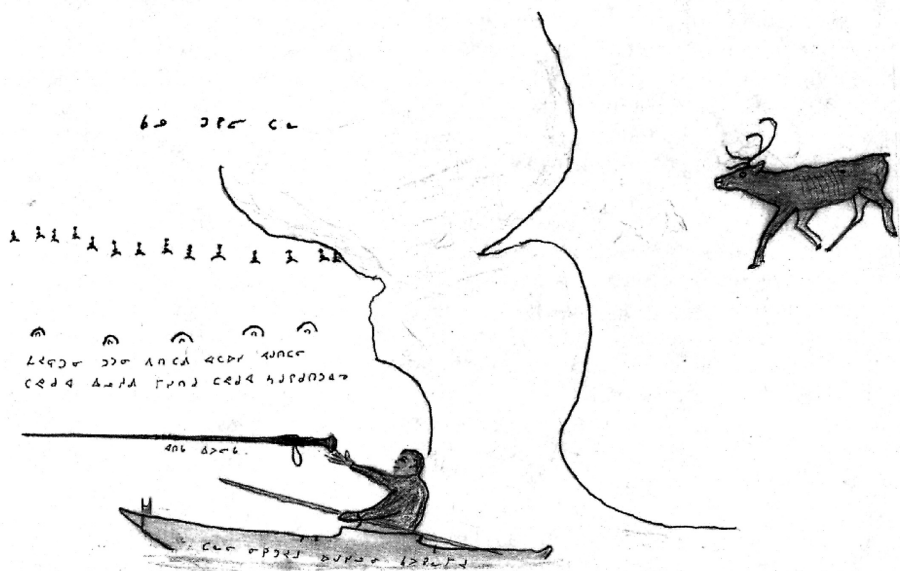


Figure 6. *Aulaqquat* "bogeyman" inuksuit. Translation of Inuktitut text: "During the September migration, the caribou have to cross the lakes and rivers they meet along their route. The crossing areas are called *nalluit* (*nalluk*, sg.). The *nalluit* were traditionally used for hunting caribou. Lines of inuksuit were erected to direct the flow of caribou toward the narrowest part of the lake, where the Inuit waited. While the caribou crossed, the Inuit in *qayaqs* would shoot arrows at them, and also use the *ipuligaq* — a long spear. When the caribou set foot on the other side of the crossing, they encountered a series of inuksuit, of which they had to follow. There again, hunters were waiting with bows and arrows." *Tuumasi Kudluk Collection*, D-6, Avataq Cultural Institute, Montréal.

There is no doubt that inuksuit were indispensable commodities for the travelling hunter. In fact, Western explorers also adopted the use of cairns for navigation and storage in the Arctic. Robert Peary (1907) regularly described that his travelling party built cairns on hilltops, leaving a report or message in a bottle nearby. One cairn frequently visited by Peary and Stefánsson was *Alerts* cairn — built around 1877 at Cape Sheridan and aptly named after the British Admiralty exploratory vessel, *Alert* (Peary 1907: 55-56). The form and shape of *Alerts* cairn could easily be mistaken as an inuksuk built by Inuit. Stefánsson even endorsed the building of inuksuk in his *Arctic Manual*. He expounded that, "Where records are being deposited, the best way is [...] to erect, out of things of no value to the Eskimos, a beacon which will be seen from a distance" (Stefánsson 1945: 497).

Modified inuksuit forms

Inuksuit are no longer just markers of the temporal landscape. In southern Canada, tourist shops and Inuit art galleries are overwhelmed with inuksuit trinkets and other paraphernalia: mini-inuksuit, inuksuit mouse pads, fridge magnets, jewellery and soap-stone carvings of inuksuit made by Inuit artists. In terms of the space 'inuksuit' items occupy on these retail shelves, they are on par with other infamous icons that supposedly represent the Indian people of southern Canada, such as leather moccasins and the wooden totem poles of British Columbia.

Inspection of a series of posters drawn by young Canadians for a recent competition reveals but one example of the extent to which inuksuit have filtered into Canada's mainstream culture as a symbol. The competition, under the auspices of Heritage Canada, invited people eighteen years and younger to draw posters that showed their pride of Canada. Out of the thirteen finalists selected from each province and territory, five entries included an image of an inuksuk. Interestingly, the winning poster of the 2000 competition features a mosaic of Canadian icons; the red maple leaf; snow capped mountains; pine forests; the CN tower; totem poles and an impressive rendering of an inuksuk. The poster represents Canada symbolically — the inuksuk image undeniably encapsulates the Arctic.

A growing number of people in southern Canada are also embracing the inuksuk symbol. Intriguingly, adaptations of the inuksuk form are occupying many front gardens of suburban residences in Quebec City, Ottawa and Montreal — replacing the garden gnome and pink flamingo folly. Moreover, the inuksuit serve a growing global audience. For example, a gigantic topiary of an inuksuk featured prominently at the 2000 and 2001 *Mosaicultures Internationales* competition in Montreal. The topiary sculpture became a symbol of the competition, captivating local and international audiences. Similarly, an inuksuk positioned in the forecourt of the McCord Museum in Montreal exposes tourists to a "piece of the Arctic." Likewise, along a popular pedestrian path in Stanley Park, Vancouver, stands a bold and dominant inuksuk that faces towards the waterfront (Figure 7). And, at Toronto Airport, an inuksuk was built as a symbolic gesture — in recognition of its heritage value insofar as being one of the earliest navigation aids known to humankind (Lewis 1966: 85).

The Inuit themselves have also joined the inuksuk marketing campaign in the North. A large 'inuksuk' with long legs and outstretched arms was erected at the entrance to the Inuit service centre of Kuujjuaq, Nunavik, as a welcome sign to the Arctic. However, many visitors to the town are unaware that this stone arrangement (Figure 8) is not an inuksuk, but rather an *inunnguaq* ("a likeness of a human") (Lewis 1966: 86; Hallendy 2000: 46). This *inunnguaq* a Kuujjuaq contains no hidden messages about landscape — its sole purpose is to convey a feeling of arrival to the Arctic and therefore does not "act in the capacity of a human" (Lewis 1966: 86; Hallendy 2000: 46) like a *bona fide* inuksuk.

The modified inuksuit forms are merely symbols that capture the essence of the Arctic. They do not describe landscape *per se*, but they provoke and stimulate the observer to enquire about how the stone formations relate to the land. The danger exists that many may perceive the modified inuksuit forms as purely decorative objects rather than as a sequence of navigation networks that straddle the landscape. Inuksuit cannot be extracted from their setting, for to do so would be to Westernise them. Western science cannot and should not attempt to codify inuksuit — they are an intricate system of objects, sites and places that do not belong to a system of scientific structures. Much educational fallacy results when dislocating an ethnographic feature such as an inuksuk from its environment, as witnessed in Australia with the sales of boomerangs, dot-paintings and didgeridoos. Inuksuit are living entities, but they may soon become 'artefacts' encased in glass cabinets if marketing continues unchecked.

Methods of preserving ethnographic objects and sites in Arctic Canada

Numerous federal and provincial governmental departments in Canada offer a multitude of methods to legislatively protect the integrity of aboriginal cultural landscapes and ethnographic objects such as inuksuit. The mode of preservation to protect aboriginal sites and places of significance depends largely on zoning characteristics, land claim agreements, land use regimes and political jurisdictions.

Land use studies and traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) studies performed throughout Arctic Canada in the last thirty years have accurately identified the location of manifold sacred places, archaeological sites, and historically significant hunting and fishing grounds worthy of preservation. With this in mind, noteworthy studies that have revealed Inuit intimate relationships with the land include: the *Inuit Land Use and Occupancy Project* (Freeman 1976), which illustrated the extensive Inuit use of land and marine environments of the Northwest Territories (produced for the Inuit Land Claims Commission); *Voices from the Bay* (McDonald *et al.* 1997), a collection of TEK of Inuit and Cree in the Hudson Bay bioregion; and the *Nunavik Land Use Study*, an ongoing collation (since the mid-1980s by the Makivik Regional Corporation) of important Inuit sites, camps, cemeteries, hunting grounds, spiritual places and travel routes throughout Nunavik. Complementary to the *Nunavik Land Use Study*, although not yet officially combined, is *The Gazetteer of Inuit Place Names in Nunavik* (Müller-Wille 1987), the product of almost ten years of research recording numerous toponyms corresponding to Inuit villages in Nunavik. Studies have also been conducted to



Figure 7. Inuksuk as a tourist attraction along a section of Stanley Park, Vancouver. Photo by the author, 2001.



Figure 8. *Innunguait* "a likeness of a human" greets people as an entry sign to the Inuit town of Kuujuaq, Nunavik. Photo by the author, 2000.

ascertain Inuit use of arctic sea-ice for whale and seal hunting in the NWT (Breton *et al.* 1984). Moreover, one of the other major TEK studies undertaken in the North, which has profoundly influenced bureaucratic resource management decision-making, is the Labrador study entitled, *Our Footprints are Everywhere: Inuit Land Use and Occupancy in Labrador* (Brice-Bennett 1977). Numerous other TEK studies have been performed in the boreal forest regions of Western Canada, the most in-depth of these being the *Dene TEK Pilot Project* (Dene Cultural Institute 1989) and *Athapaskan Oral History Project* (Cruikshank 1990).

Protection of ethnographic objects under Land Claim Agreements

Both the 1975 *James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement* (JBNQA) and the 1993 *Nunavut Land Claim Agreement* (NLCA) include specific policies about how aboriginal sites of significance and cultural artefacts should be preserved *in situ*. In accordance with terms stipulated in the NLCA, the *Inuit Heritage Trust* was created to serve as an archaeological management and protection agency for cultural sites throughout the Nunavut territory. Responsible for safeguarding more than 6500 documented sites of archaeological and ethnographic importance, the Trust also continues to define Inuit sacred and spiritual sites throughout Nunavut. Articles 33 and 34 of the NLCA stipulate the responsibilities of the Trust and specify conservation and management procedures with respect to archaeological resources, traditional place names, ethnographic objects and archival materials. In accordance with Article 33, before any archaeological research can be performed in Nunavut, permission must be granted from the Trust. A permit is only granted by the Trust on the proviso that the research will not adversely impact or severely damage the integrity of the site. Moreover, researchers must adhere to strict guidelines in regard to the treatment of newly discovered archaeological specimens. Stringent rules protecting sites and artefacts are also articulated in Articles 33 and 34, including the fact that the Crown and the Trust conjointly own all archaeological specimens found within the Nunavut Settlement Area. The definition of archaeological sites under Article 33.1.1 indicates that objects such as inuksuit can be protected under the guidelines of the Inuit Heritage Trust:

A site or work within the Nunavut Settlement Area of archaeological, ethnographical or historical importance, interest or significance or a place where an archaeological specimen is found, and includes explorers cairns.

Ultimately, the decision to protect and preserve inuksuit, *tunillarviit* ("offering places"), and *aglinaqtut* ("places of veneration and power") is contingent upon the assessment and approval of the Trust.

The *Nunavut Archaeological and Palaeontological Sites Regulations* (P.C. 2001-1111: c. 28) specified under the 2001 *Nunavut Act*, expands upon Articles 33 and 34 of the NLCA. In respect to protection of artefacts, fossils and archaeological sites the Act clearly stipulates rules that must be abided by researchers and non-researchers:

1. No person shall search for archaeological sites, palaeontological sites, fossils or archaeological artefacts, or survey a palaeontological or archaeological site, without a Class 1 or Class 2 permit.
2. No person shall excavate, alter or otherwise disturb an archaeological site, palaeontological site, or remove an archaeological artefact from an archaeological site, or remove a fossil from palaeontological site without a Class 2 permit.
3. No person, other than a person engaged in a search and rescue operation, shall dive, or approach with an underwater submersible, to within 30 m of an archaeological artefact without a Class 2 Permit.

National and provincial park protection guidelines

The protection of ethnographic sites and objects is not limited to the Inuit Heritage Trust of Nunavut. National, provincial and territorial parks also provide an effective means of protecting indigenous cultural landscapes. Particular zoning regulations define the degree of preservation within parks. Quebec Provincial Parks, for instance, comprise of up to five preservation zones (Parks Act 2000):

1. **Natural Environmental Zone:** Part of the territory of a park allocated to discovery and exploitation of the environment (controlled recreation permitted).
2. **Maximum Preservation Zone:** Part of the territory of a park allocated exclusively to the preservation of the integrity of the environment (tourists unequivocally restricted).
3. **Preservation Zone:** Part of the territory of a park allocated to the preservation of the environment in general (limited tourist access).
4. **Intensive Recreation Zone:** Part of the territory of a park allocated to outdoor intensive recreation (active recreation).
5. **Services Zone:** Part of the territory of a park allocated to reception, information, or management (amenities and infrastructure).

Interestingly, the first provincial park to be created in Arctic Quebec, *Pingualuit Park*, due to open in winter 2004, has been compartmentalised into four preservation zones, excluding the intensive recreation zone. Centred on Pingualuk Crater (formed from a meteorite crashing to earth approximately 1.4 million years ago), the park has been designed and zoned accordingly to protect sites of exceptional natural and archaeological significance. The crater itself and resultant pristine lake are protected under the Maximum Preservation Zone legislation — tourists are not permitted to enter the area under any circumstances — only beneficiaries under the JBNQA. Upon the request of Inuit residents of Kangiqsujaq (main users of the park area), the boundaries of Pingualuit Park were extended to incorporate a number of rare and unusual inuksuit that were initially located beyond the park boundary (FAPAQ 2000). Consequently, these inuksuit are now protected under the Preservation Zone regulation and can be monitored by park superintendents.

Nunavut Parks consist of two preservation zones, as defined in the NLCA (Article 8.1.1. 1993): (1) Special Preservation Zones: specific areas or features which deserve special preservation because they contain unique, rare or endangered features or are the best examples of natural features, and (2) Wilderness Zones: areas which are good representations of national history themes and areas which will be maintained in an

original state. As the number of territorial and national parks continues to grow in Nunavut and elsewhere in Arctic Canada, so too will the protection of Aboriginal cultural landscapes and ethnographic objects expand.

National heritage sites and the Historic Sites and Monuments Act

Notwithstanding the effectiveness of preservation zones within parks as a protective strategy, the *Canada National Parks Act* (Parks Canada 2000: c. 32, no. 42) provides the Governor in Council with special powers to designate any land within a national park as a national historic site of Canada — a site that consequentially receives unequivocal protection by Parks Canada. According to the Act, a site may be a place where an event of historical and national importance occurred, or it may even be an historic landmark, object or place of scientific interest.

Eleven national heritage sites have been designated in Nunavut (Parks Canada 2000) since 1964. They consist of prehistoric and historic Inuit sites, European whaling stations, and shipwrecks from European expeditions. One of the registered sites includes Enuks Point (southwest Baffin Island), an area that consists of more than 100 inuksuit of varying forms and types. Registered as a site housing unique archaeological artefacts, Enuks Point was subsequently registered in 1969 under national heritage status (Parks Canada 2001). A number of inuksuit are also inadvertently protected on Igloodik Island, a small archipelago in Nunavut that has been designated a national historic site by Parks Canada because of its rich archaeological significance. Archaeological research on the island has uncovered the most complete record found thus far with respect to Pre-Dorset, Dorset and Inuit occupation from two thousand BC (Parks Canada 2001).

The Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada (HSMBC) is the governing organization charged with the mandate to recognise and preserve places, persons or events of significant heritage value, although it is the Minister of Canadian Heritage who is vested with the powers to designate things of national historic significance. The HSMBC functions as a body to review nominations and make recommendations to the Minister. Unlike the guaranteed legal protection of national heritage sites and places designated by Parks Canada, the things designated by the HSMBC enjoy no protection, only public status and awareness.

When the *Historic Sites and Monuments Act* was enacted in 1919 (the commemorative program was enhanced in 1953), the Board focused primarily on built forms. It was not until much later that attention was paid to streetscapes, districts, gardens and urban and rural landscapes. The HSMBC has recently focused however, on recognising, identifying and classifying Aboriginal cultural landscapes in Canada. In response to the trend towards preserving Aboriginal cultural landscapes, Parks Canada generated a series of guidelines that expanded upon HSMBC's vague concepts and definitions of cultural landscapes (Buggey 2000). Despite the rigour of Parks Canada's guidelines, it remains difficult to ascertain (for the purpose of preservation) whether cultural landscape features such as inuksuit should be defined as a place or

event. As elucidated earlier, the fact that some inuksuit have nonetheless already received preservation status at Erukso Point confirms that other inuksuit could be preserved elsewhere. A discussion of the methods by which inuksuit may be identified through preservation guidelines is nevertheless warranted to aid future protection and to diffuse any ambiguity of what category it belongs.

Under the HSMBC (1953) guidelines, a place may be designated of national historic significance if it "illustrates or symbolises in whole or in part a cultural tradition." Furthermore, a place must be in a "condition that respects the integrity of its design, materials, workmanship, function and / or setting." Any inuksuk could therefore be defined as a place, however its designation is somewhat constrained by the criteria stating, "the boundaries of the place must be clearly defined." Perhaps tangible places with rigid edges such as buildings and parks can be subjected to these criteria, but inuksuit, which span across vast regions of the Arctic in linear and irregular formations, do not have definitive boundaries. This is analogous to the Australian Aboriginal concept of "dreaming tracks" or "songlines" — invisible mythical pathways that meander all over Australia describing the stories of Aboriginal creation and legendary totemic beings (Chatwin 1998: 2). Dreaming tracks and inuksuit relate and maintain a dialogue with the wider environmental setting such as rivers, mountains, the night sky and animals. These, and other external influences shape the nature of the dreaming and of inuksuit boundaries — lines that constantly evolve and are transformed as the environment endures natural and anthropogenic modifications. Moreover, boundaries also become skewed as new legends and myths emerge or are expanded upon in contemporary indigenous cultures. Traditional stories about mythical and natural boundaries have also atrophied with the passing of indigenous elders.

The definition of places under the HSMBC 1953 Act is somewhat ambiguous and misleading; sacred areas and cultural spaces with indistinct borders stand a better chance of protection under current Parks Canada legislation.

It is interesting to know that both the HSMBC and the *Nunavut Act* (2001) prescribe cut-off dates with respect to the designation of nationally significant sites. The HSMBC excludes aboriginal cultural landscapes from its 1975 cut-off date — it is only applicable to architectural structures and other built interventions on the land. Conversely, the *Nunavut Act* states that archaeological artefacts (of which may constitute inuksuit) may only be protected as a national heritage site if the object or activity is more than 50 years old and if an unbroken chain of possession or regular pattern of usage can be demonstrated. With respect to inuksuit, this Act indeed fails to appreciate that inuksuit are constantly being repaired, modified and new ones constructed. This definition of archaeological artefacts places more emphasis on time instead of respecting ongoing traditions — a definition that ignores cultural hybridity as a heritage factor.

Perhaps the heritage value of inuksuit should not be determined through individual assessments (a laborious exercise in itself), but rather based upon the traditional act of making them. Ranking the importance of each inuksuk would prove difficult, especially those that work in unison or those that possess divergent meanings to

different Inuit groups. All inuksuit, regardless of age or characteristics, should perhaps be preserved as a mark of respect of the tradition, and this includes those inuksuit that have been constructed in the last 50 years and those that will be built in the future. The Inuit themselves have long recognised the importance of preserving inuksuit forms, as the following passage by Inuk elder Taamusi Qumaq attests:

We are so respectful of our ancestors that we can't destroy what they made. We can't even touch the inuksuit they made, much less destroying them. This is how I am today, because I can't destroy what my ancestors made. And I think all Inuit have the same feeling — not wanting to destroy or abuse or even joke and make fun of the inuksuit that our Elders made. Such is our respect for the Elders and their "belongings" (in Hallendy 1990).

The inuksuit legacy can only grow stronger as Inuit culture continues to embrace the historical actions of their forefathers. They are precious entities and will remain indefinitely as signs on the landscape if they are collectively preserved.

Another argument for the preservation of inuksuit is to consider them as a series of events. As mentioned previously, the *aulaqquat* inuksuit, which were used as decoys for trapping caribou, encapsulate both a place and event. The *aulaqquat* inuksuit remain stagnant for most of the year, becoming active when the caribou migrate into the region. They mark important caribou seasonal migrational paths and form the venue where a hive of hunting and trading activities occurred between groups. Mysteriously, in the early 1900s, the caribou in some areas did not return to follow their traditional paths, leaving many *aulaqquat* sites lingering on the land as "ghost towns." For scientists who track the caribou journey across the Arctic, these inuksuit would reveal the passages caribou once followed in bygone eras. Other inuksuit that marked events were the *napariat* inuksuit — beacons built at the mouths of lakes or rivers that described the site to make camp in summer for fishing. Built to be as high as a man's hip, string lines made from seal skin were strung between them and used to hang fish on to dry for the winter (Hallendy 1985).

Potential threats to the integrity of Aboriginal cultural landscapes

It may be questionable whether inuksuit need to be preserved when no immediate threat of their destruction or removal is apparent. Quite often nature is to blame for the demolition of inuksuit because of strong winds and bears, however this damage is minute and localised compared to the impact large-scale mining operations, hydro-electricity plants, and the restrictions imposed by national and provincial parks, have on modifying the landscape. These latter influences already loom over vast tracts of land, with provisions to occupy other areas in the Arctic.

As previously mentioned, Pingualuit Park is the first of five provincial parks planned for the Nunavik territory. Located 88 km southwest of the Inuit village of Kangiqsujuaq, the Pingualuit region has been of particular subsistence and spiritual importance to Inuit in prehistoric and modern times. The idea to create Pingualuit Park was contingent upon the signing of the JBNQA — the instigators for its development were, surprisingly, the Inuit themselves. The four other parks planned for Nunavik

include: *Parc des Monts-Torngat-et-de-la-Rivière-Koroc*, located to the east of Ungava Bay in the Torngat Mountains; *Parc des Lacs-Guillaume-Delisle-et-à-L'Eau-Claire*, which borders near the Inuit village of Umiujaq beside Hudson Bay; *Parc du Cap-Wolstenholme*, situated at the north-west tip of Nunavik fronting Hudson Strait; and *Parc des Monts-de-Puvirnituq*, which overlooks north-eastern Hudson Bay. Another five federal parks are earmarked for Arctic Canada in the near future.

Despite the seemingly superficial nature of the park boundaries to Inuit, the demarcated areas have in fact appropriated space with Western notions of preservation and conservation. Efforts to preserve geological formations and biota within parks may be counter to Inuit hunting and fishing practices performed in the area. Since hunting and fishing is still very much a part of Inuit identity and way of life, it is important that parks are planned to accommodate traditional Inuit activities. It is imperative that potential park spaces and their boundaries are clearly defined and appreciated by all stakeholders.

The James Bay Cree of Northern Quebec have witnessed first hand the destruction of their traditional hunting and camping grounds as a result of the hydroelectricity projects administered by Hydro-Quebec since 1971. By 1985, the La Grande, Eastmain and Caniapiscau rivers were dammed, effectively submersing and destroying 11,500 km² of pristine caribou, migratory bird and marine mammal habitat. The second phase, known as the *Great Whale Project* which was completed in 1999, involved the diversion of four rivers and the subsequent flooding of 4400 km² (Draffin 2001). Hydro-Quebec also has plans in place to develop the *Grande Baleine Complex* by 2019, which will engulf even more parcels of land.

In the northern extremities of Nunavik, two immense nickel and diamond mining operations exist and continue to expand. The Diamond Discoveries Corporation (DDC) controls six kimberlite (diamond) sites on the eastern shores of Ungava Bay and the Torngat range, occupying a region of 470 km² (DDC 2001). The nickel mine at Raglan, covers an area 55 km across and is situated 60 km west of the Inuit village of Kangiqsujuaq and 100 km southeast of Salluit (Falconbridge 2000). Both mining companies emphasise that local communities were consulted and environmental impact studies conducted before operations proceeded. Assuming this is the case, it is interesting to speculate what the fate of inuksuit has been in these regions. Did the Inuit emphasise the importance of inuksuit? Did they make a case for their preservation, despite the fact that not all inuksuit are used in a traditional manner? Have the mining operations significantly altered the environmental fabric which inuksuit relate to? These questions begin to highlight the need to preserve aspects of Aboriginal cultural landscapes before further developments emerge.

If all parks are developed as planned in Nunavik, their combined area will total 20,000 km², or 4% of the territory. Coupled with hydro-electricity schemes in Nunavik, which already occupy approximately 16,000 km², and mining leases that claim 525 km², the collective area of imposed interventions in Nunavik will near 8%. This figure may appear minute, but the areas selected to become parks are some of the

most rewarding hunting and fishing sites, not to mention the most spectacular geographical regions for scenic and geomorphologic appreciation.

Self determination and autonomy as a means of protection

Nunavik, like many other remote indigenous administered regions around the world in settler nations, is ultimately controlled and governed by the state. With respect to governmental authority, however, the ratification of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement in 1975 afforded Nunavimmiut with marginal powers and some political clout. The JBNQA is considered the first modern land claims settlement in Canada. Borne out of legal disputes over land rights and land tenure between the Government of Quebec and indigenous residents of Nunavik (Inuit, Cree and Naskapis), the Agreement cemented doubt over future conflicts involving ownership and jurisdiction. By "forfeiting and surrendering title" of territory to the Government of Quebec, Inuit received, in exchange, compensation money, land and supra-municipal type powers over the entire territory north of the 55th parallel (Makivik 2000). The Avataq Cultural Institute was created in 1980 and it ensures that the culture and language of the Nunavimmiut are protected and promoted. That institute has an archaeology department which mandate is to identify, study and protect archaeological and burial sites.

Similarly, the signing of the Nunavut Land Claim Agreement in 1993 returned political powers and control of the territory back to the Inuit. Agencies such as the Nunavut Planning Commission and the Nunavut Impact Review Board have since been established to ensure sustainable develop of the territory whilst maintaining and preserving Inuit culture.

Conclusion

The case for preserving inuksuit should not be limited by the shortcomings apparent in the various Acts responsible for identifying and designating Aboriginal cultural landscapes and ethnographic objects. Inuksuit are ingrained in Inuit tradition and culture; they are signs on the landscape that demark important sites, places and events. They are nationally significant, and need to be considered for preservation before mining sites and hydroelectricity plants erode further reaches of the Arctic landscape. If inuksuit are positioned within an area that is likely to undergo changes, then measures should be taken to ensure minimal disruption to the existing fabric of the place. Appropriate site planning and environmental impact statements will prove crucial in guaranteeing that inuksuit will be remembered as temporal markers on the landscape.

Clearly, inuksuit have shaped the way the Inuit people perceived the landscape and thereby traditionally traversed across it. Over time the inuksuit shifted from the physical to the spiritual realm, where stories and legends were created to celebrate their

qualities. Stories about inuksuit will always be embedded in Inuit mythology, but their physical existence forms the integral chapter of the story.

Legislation cannot protect inuksuit from ongoing tourism marketing campaigns, but public awareness of their importance to the Inuit may reduce their fate of becoming exclusively a garden folly or collectable trinket. With the increased attention paid to inuksuit, one may speculate that the rebirth of inuksuit stories and songs may be imminent.

Despite the technological advances in Inuit society, inuksuit will always perform two synonymous roles — one that conveys messages about places and navigation and the other that reminds them of ancestral relationships with the land. Inuksuit are now revered as symbols of the Arctic, a symbol in their own right.

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Figure Captions:

Figure 1. Large Inuksuk on Baffin Island, Nunavut c. 1970

Photo: Prof. Peter Jacobs, Université de Montréal.

Figure 2. Inuksuit on ridge top near the Inuit village Quaqtaq, Nunavik, 2000.

Described to author by Inuit elder David Okpik as indicating a safe place to make camp. Photo by the author.

Figure 3. *Inuksugait* pointer marking direction to the Cache. Drawn by anonymous Isummasaqqik School Student (Quaqtaq) March 1999.

Figure 4. *Niungvaliruluit* inuksuit mark a navigation route across the landscape.

Drawn by anonymous Isummasaqqik School Student (Quaqtaq), March 1999.

Figure 5. *Tikkuutit* pointer. Translation of Inuktitut text: "the piles of rocks in the middle are pointers. The people who own the qamutik had left this message for the next traveller to inform him where they were staying and the direction to take to get there. The pointer has three rocks under it, which implies that it takes three nights to get there. A note is also tied to the top or the pole for further instruction. This is how the inland Inuit used to describe travel directions." *Tuumasi Kudluk Collection*, D-34, Avataq Cultural Institute, Montreal.

Figure 6. *Aulaqquat* 'bogeyman' inuksuit. During the September migration, the caribou have to cross the lakes and rivers they meet along their route. The crossing areas are called nalluit (nalluk, sg.). The nalluit were traditionally used for hunting caribou. Lines of Inuksuit were erected to direct the flow of caribou toward the narrowest part of the lake, where the Inuit waited. While the caribou crossed, the Inuit in qayaqs would shoot arrows at them, and also use the ipuligaq- a long spear. When the caribou set foot on the other side of the crossing, they encountered a series of Inuksuit, of which they had to follow. There again, hunters were waiting with bows and arrows." *Tuumasi Kudluk Collection*, D-6, Avataq Cultural Institute, Montreal.

Figure 7. *Inuksuk* as a tourist attraction along a section of Stanley Park, Vancouver.

Photo by the author, 2001.

Figure 8. *Innunguait* "a likeness of a human" greets people as an entry sign to the Inuit town of Kuujjuaq, Nunavik. Photo by the author, 2000.