



LUCKY ESKIMO SYMBOL INUKSUK



of the nowadays Canadians & Americans

Inuksuks (the actual plural is inuksuit) are stone figures created by the first inhabitants of the Canadian north, the Inuit. The Inuit have lived in the areas now called Canada, Alaska, and Greenland for thousands of years and inuksuit can be found in all these regions. The word "inuksuk" is an Inuktitut word meaning "to act in the capacity of a human" and comes from the word "inuk" which can be translated as "human being".

Popularity of the Inuksuk

In the last decade, the inuksuk has captured the imagination of Canadians from coast to coast and human-like stone figures can be found along roadsides everywhere. Wear a T-shirt with an inuksuk on it and Canadians anywhere on the planet recognize it and smile. On April 1, 1999, Canada's geographical and political map changed when a new jurisdiction, Nunavut, was created. Nunavut was formed from the eastern part of the Northwest Territories and was officially named Canada's third territory. Nunavut, "our land" in Inuktitut, was created by an agreement between the Inuit of the Eastern and Central Arctic and the Canadian government. Amongst other things, the agreement gives Inuit the right to self-government and self-determination. Not only has Nunavut made Inuit culture, concerns, and aspirations more visible, it has brought much more attention to the inuksuk, as you can see from the Nunavut flag. Popular appeal combined with official recognition has expanded the inuksuk's realm from the cold Canadian north to the warmth of Canadian hearts and hearths everywhere.



Do Other Places Have Inuksuit?

There are other inuksuit-like structures in the world. For examples, the apashektas of the Andes, the chortens of Nepal, the seite of Lapland, and the dorazy chaloveka of Siberia. And, of course, there is the Chinese tower. Here at ORIANA we can't tell you much about these other structures but we would like to know more.

What do they mean:

Inuksuit come in a variety of shapes and sizes and have many functions. As indicators, Inuksuit have been used to mark safe or dangerous crossing places, treacherous water, falling rocks, a caribou crossing, good hunting for seal or walrus. Good fishing and many other things. Inuksuit also function as instruments of navigation and astronomy, for instance to indicate the best way home, to point to the position of mainland from a distant island, or to point to the Niqirtsuituq (The Northern star) Inuksuit can serve in a spiritual capacity as well, to indicate a place of death, a place where life is renewed or where spirits reside, where judgments or decisions are made or where celebrations and festivals are to be held. An Inuksut may also indicate an object that should not be approached or touched, or an object that brings good fortune.

