

# ARCTIC GUIDES



*Peter Irniq with an inuksuk he built in Switzerland.*

**INUKSUK MEANS “LIKENESS OF A PERSON,” PETER SAYS. FOR MORE THAN ONE, THE WORD IS INUKSUIT.**

Peter built this inuksuk at the Macdonald-Cartier International Airport in Ottawa using rocks from different parts of Nunavut. If this were on the Arctic tundra, you could look through the open parts like a telescope to see a good fishing or hunting place. Other inuksuit have a stone on top pointing to a river or lake with good fishing. Peter has also built inuksuit all over the world, from Scotland to Uruguay, and many in Canada and the United States. When he builds an inuksuk, he is usually also asked to speak about Inuit culture. “Building inuksuit is a way to build new relationships with Canada,” Peter says.

**Inuit have built these stone markers and used them to find their way for thousands of years.**

“The inuksuk has always been a symbol of survival, since time immemorial,” says Inuit cultural awareness teacher Peter (pronounced the Inuit way, Piita) Irniq. “It’s a pile of rocks that is always built in areas of good fishing, good caribou hunting, good seal hunting. I have travelled all over Inuit homelands from Alaska to Canada and to Greenland — we all have the same interpretation of the inuksuk. Whenever I’m around inuksuit in the Arctic I am never scared, because I know that Inuit have lived there before me for many, many thousands of years and have survived from hunting and fishing.”



*Public Domain, Peter Irniq*



**THIS IS ACTUALLY AN INUNNGUAQ. PETER SAYS IT MARKS A PLACE WHERE THERE WAS VIOLENCE OR DEATH. ITS ARMS DON'T GIVE DIRECTIONS. "INUIT KNOW WHAT THESE MEAN," PETER SAYS WITH A LAUGH. "IT'S ONLY THE WHITE PEOPLE WHO MISUNDERSTAND."**



Nunavut's flag shows a more traditional inuksuk.

"Every inuksuk is different. Inuit have been building inuksuit for many, many thousands of years. Inuksuit are built to withstand very strong winds. They're made of heavy rocks and if they move a bit, we put little rock wedges in."



Peter built the inuksuk in the background. This photo is from October 2005 when it was unveiled at the Juno Beach Centre in Normandy, France. It honours Indigenous soldiers and all who died in the Second World War. "I built the inuksuk with a window on top, facing directly to Canada from France. This was to bring the war dead through the window back to Canada in spirit."