

Flight 661

Kevin Honey, Principal, Fraser Valley Adventist Academy, Aldergrove, BC

Recently, while on flight 661, I noticed an article by Scott Earl Smith in the in-flight magazine "Airlines" on Inukshuks. The term Inukshuk (pronounced IN-OOK-SHOOK) is an Inuit word which, when translated, means "in the image of man." Inukshuks have been used for centuries by the Inuit nation in hunting caribou, as route markers, and food-cache site markers. Stones are roughly placed in such a way as to represent the shape of a man, and can be seen from quite a distance.



Since the Inuit are a nomadic people traveling across the vast barren tundra, these strategically placed markers are life-saving beacons pointing to a safe igloo home, or a hunter's seal-skin tent. There may also be caches of food stored for a time of need near the Inukshuks.

Significant-moment markers for us living in another place cause us to pause at these markers. We adjust our focus like the Inuit adjust their bearings by the Inukshuk markers. We reference our lives by the date that we first met, the date we married, or the date of our first-born. We say that an event took place while living here, or there. "Or was that after the cat ate mom's goldfish?" Even though we have a calendar with days and months and years, we prefer to mark our lives by significant events or markers.

Inukshuk markers show the way for the Inuit just as we are to show the way. As the Inuit have made the Inukshuks in the image of man, we are made in the image of God. As markers of the way, our lives give meaning to others who come after us. As travelers in life, teachers get to a point where we stop and allow those who follow us (our students) to look at us as markers of "The way." How we have conducted our lives leaves behind a legacy. That legacy is a marker for good, or a marker for bad - only two options.

Our image of Christ is not pure just as the Inukshuk images are representations of man, and although not complete, they are often the only markers available to others. Those that follow need to be given the clearest beacons. For the misguided Inuit being pointed in the wrong direction into the frozen tundra will lead to certain death, so our misguided youth will certainly come to that same fate, eternal death, if made to follow our misguided image.

We are strategically placed markers. Are we, as teachers, life-saving beacons pointing to a safe eternal home, or a misguided marker pointing the youth in our care to eternal damnation? You decide.