Knowing Places. The Inuinnait, Landscapes and the Environment

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Abstract: This book deals with the geographic knowledge of Inuit of the central Canadian Arctic, and explores the importance of the land in the construction of identity. It shows how Inuinnaqtun geographic knowledge is a knowledge in action, and is best described as a holistic 'wisdom of the land'. It involves a mix of practical skills such as orientation and meteorology, and of oral tradition: stories and place names told and remembered. Learning is accomplished through observation and experience, and by a careful attention to numerous stories. Place names describe features as seen and understood by specific people, in specific contexts and experiences related to life and travels on the land. Along with the stories of Inuit epics and family tales, they transform the wide expanses of the physical landscapes into 'memoryscapes', inhabited by humans, beings, animals, and spirits of all kinds. Inuinnait geographic knowledge is organized around three central concepts: relativity, connectivity and subjectivity, that also organize the social structure, and the Inuinnaqtun language.

The book is organized into five chapters and two appendixes. A brief introduction is followed by a "vignette" which depicts daily life in the early 1990s. Chapter One gives a historical overview of Inuinnait social structure and seasonal movements throughout the 20th century. The second chapter identifies the various elements that comprise Inuinnaqtun geographic knowledge. Chapter Three is dedicated to the interpretation of the 1,007 Inuinnait place names collected by the author in the early 1990s. Chapter Four describes the framework that organizes the Inuinnaqtun geographic knowledge system and its dynamic. An Epilogue provides some insights about the outcome of the research. Two appendixes complete the book: a lexicon of the place-names collected with their English translation, and a detailed presentation of the scientific context of the research and methodology developed. The analysis also relies on twenty five original figures (maps and diagrams).
According to the Romanian Ministry of Environment and Forests, the development of a landfill site means the loss of approximately 30 to 300 species per hectare. Changes also occur in local species, with some mammals and birds being replaced by species that feed on refuse, such as rats and crows. Vegetation changes also occur, regardless of the duration of the landfill site, as some plant species are replaced by others. From the Back Cover. Knowing Places: The Inuinnait, Landscapes, and the Environment deals with the geographic knowledge of Inuit of the central Canadian Arctic, and explores the importance of the land in the construction of identity. Inuinnait geographic knowledge is organized around three central concepts: relativity, connectivity, and subjectivity, that also organize the social structure, and the Inuinnaqtun language. It is a knowledge in action, best described as a holistic ‘wisdom of the land.’ It involves a mix of practical skills such as orientation and meteorology, and of oral "Knowing Places: The Inuinnait, Landscapes and the Environment," by Beatrice Collignon. adapted from the translation of Les Inuit. Ce qu'ils sauent du territoire by Beatrice Collignon (CHarrattan 1996). (translation and scientific editing by Linna Weber Miller-Wille). Circumpolar Research Series No. 10 Canadian Circumpolar Institute (CCI) Press March 2006. Table of Contents. Chapter Four: Enacted Knowledge: How Inuinnait Live. their Geography Chapter Five: Geographic Knowledge and Cultural Change. Epilogue Bibliography Appendices Appendix A : Translation of the place names Appendix B : The scientific context of the research. 149. 183.