

WILLIAM B. KEMP (1936–2020)

Born and raised in Cincinnati, Ohio, Bill Kemp took his B.A. at Miami University (a.k.a. Miami of Ohio) and went on to Michigan State University for graduate studies. Following six years as an instructor at the State University of New York, Binghamton, Bill moved to McGill University in 1970, quickly becoming an integral contributor to the Department of Geography's developing Human Ecology and Northern Cultural programs, bringing with him a special focus on the Indigenous cultures of Canada's Arctic and Subarctic.

Bill's fascination with northern Canada and its Indigenous Peoples began, however, years before. In 1961, Bill and five fellow students, guided by the map and the notes made by Samuel Hearne during his 1770–71 exploration, made a journey by canoe from Lake Athabaska down the Coppermine River to Coronation Gulf on the Northwest Territories Arctic coast. This first experience led Bill to Michigan State to study Inuit culture and prehistory under Moreau Maxwell.

Among his first assignments was to carry out a six-week archaeological survey of a small island about 25km from Kimmirut (then Lake Harbour), Nunavut. Within a day a violent storm struck and wrecked Bill's camp, leaving him to wait out the storm as best he could. In typical Bill fashion, the storm was fortuitous for it not only forced a group of Inuit travelling from their camp at *Imiligaarjuit* (Cape Tanfield) to Lake Harbour to land their canoe to wait out the storm but brought Bill, who Killikti named *Inukpaq* (large person), into a friendship and collaboration that would shape the rest of Bill's life.

Bill was an ethnographer, cultural ecologist, archaeologist and consummate map maker. His research among the Inuit of Baffin Island and Northern Québec (today Nunavik) was not only comprehensive, but also deeply insightful. During a year living with Killikti and his family at *Imiligaarjuit*, Bill learned Inuktitut, a skill that allowed him to look at Inuit and the North through two lenses.

Bill arrived at McGill in 1970 and solidified a research and advocacy relationship between the Department of Geography and the Inuit of Nunavik and Nunavut that endures to the present. Before leaving the university in 1978, he directed the South Baffin Island component of the Inuit Land Use and Occupancy Project, developing ethnohistorical and cartographic databases that contributed substantively to the Nunavut Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement (signed 1993) and the creation of Nunavut, Canada's third territory in 1999. At the same time, Bill played a major role in providing scientific support to the Inuit of Nunavik. In no small sense, Bill was truly *Inukpuq*; his voluminous knowledge of and deep research with Inuit helped to explicate the essential connection between Inuit and their homelands. His energy in advocating for the Inuit contributed enormously to Canada's recognition of the rights of all its northern peoples and culminated in the first treaties in Canada with Inuit.



Bill Kemp, Nushuta Killikti, and polar bear (in the pot) at Cape Tanfield, Northwest Territories, 1967. (Photo courtesy of Lorraine Brooke)

For all his dedication to fieldwork, Bill was an inspiration to the McGill graduate and undergraduate students whom he taught and mentored at the university and in the field, many of whom remain committed to northern research and Indigenous advocacy to this day. His lectures (more teaching parables), whether on Inuit hunting or the centrality of kinship in Inuit life, were spell-binding. And while Bill never saw himself as being an orthodox academic, his seminal analysis of Inuit ecological adaptation in *Scientific American* (Kemp, 1971) and the comprehensive overview of South Baffin Island Inuit culture in the Arctic volume of the *Handbook of North American Indians* are indicative of Bill's careful scholarship (Kemp, 1984).

Bill, however, never shrank from applying what he learned. After leaving McGill, he continued his close relationship with Inuit and was instrumental in establishing the research department of Makivik Corporation, the Nunavik Inuit land claims organization, and its lauded research centre, the first Inuit-sponsored science and research facility, located in Kuujuaq on Ungava Bay. With Bill's untiring support, this meant that Inuit could develop and implement research of their own choosing and design. And true to the maps that drew him to geography, Bill did not neglect the need for Inuit to have maps that projected their perspectives onto their homelands.

Bill believed that the way forward for establishing Inuit rights to and control of their homeland was to map every aspect of Inuit life to show their intimate and dynamic knowledge and connection across the sweep of Inuit

Nunangat, from Labrador to the Mackenzie Delta. He was no less central to the mapping done in the five-year Nunavik Land Use and Ecological Mapping Project than he was in the Inuit Land Use and Occupancy Project (1972–75), also designing complementary Inuit-led wildlife ecology and harvesting surveys.

It was to these projects that Bill gave his greatest energy, working in close partnership with the Inuit he knew and lived with, eventually training a team of assistants and technical support people. The final documents that his research teams produced invariably included maps and more maps. Bill believed that every aspect of Inuit hunting, trapping, fishing and berry picking, Inuit travel routes, camps and villages, their land and sea ice travel routes, and the paths of animal migrations, birthing and denning areas, should be shown, always with the objective of demonstrating how Inuit were and are integral to the North.

After establishing Makivik Corporation's research capacity, Bill undertook to apply the research and mapping skills that he honed through his work in Nunavut and Nunavik in support of other Indigenous groups and cultural issues. To this end, he founded a small company, Strata 360, to develop new computer-based methods in order to integrate Indigenous land use, ecological and cultural information in cartographic formats. This work took him to Belize where he supported the Maya and Garifuna in their pursuit for control over their traditional lands and to Southeast Asia in aid of efforts by local peoples to protect the Mekong River. He then worked in the same way for peoples of the Upper Nile River, Africa. Always a field person, Bill immersed himself in on-site cultural and ecological research—his fundamental commitment was always to a process that began with, and would always be shaped by, his spending hour upon hour listening to and travelling with the people whose world he was seeking to understand.

During this time, Bill also joined with other researchers to work with the San (Bushmen) of South Africa, and then in Botswana and Namibia, mapping land use, heritage and family histories. The maps he made with the ǀKhomani San of the southern Kalahari Desert made a vital contribution to the 1999 land claim settlement—one of the first Indigenous land claim agreements in Africa. In Namibia and Botswana, Bill's work centered on training

San to carry out their own map-making, seeking to build the kind of capacity that he had developed with Nunavik Inuit. A cancer diagnosis in 2017 ended the traveling, but not the passion. He worked for two more years from home mentoring young cartographers.

Bill passed away on January 5 2020. He is survived by Lorraine Brooke, his wife of thirty-five years, who gave him the freedom to pursue his other passion, by his three children, Ellen, Andrew and Caroline, and his four grandchildren. Inukpaq was a gifted researcher, teacher, geographer, and cultural ecologist for whom the field was the place to learn, the basis for what he saw as truly important knowledge.

All across Canada, from the High Arctic to Montreal, in many parts of Asia and Africa, from the Mekong River to the edges of the Kalahari, those who knew and worked with Bill will long remember him with deep admiration and affection. Everywhere he went he made strong friendships and, through his profound understanding of the power of maps, did all he could to make the world a better place. A former student, on hearing of Bill's passing, fittingly wrote "May there be umiaks on ice flows and camelthorn acacias in the scorching deserts where you are going."

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