Inuksuk Landmarks

Discover the mysteries behind the Inuit-made stone landmarks in the U.S. and Canada called Inuksuk. Then, go on a rock hunt and construct an Inuksuk replica!

TEKS:
SCI 2.5 D: The student is expected to combine materials that when put together can do things that they cannot do by themselves such as building a tower or a bridge and justify the selection of those materials based on their physical properties.
SOC 5.21 A: The student is expected to describe customs and traditions of various racial, ethnic, and religious groups in the United States.
SOC 5.21 B: The student is expected to summarize the contributions of people of various racial, ethnic, and religious groups to our national identity.

Materials:
- Bag
- 5-10 stones

STEM Explanation:
Human-made stone landmarks, called Inuksuk, have been built for over 9,000 years by people that live in the Arctic. Inuksuk means “something which acts for or performs the function of a person” in Inuktitut, one of the languages of the Inuit. Traditionally, Inuksuk were built as communication, navigation, and survival aids, and the stone’s arrangements indicated the Inuksuk’s purpose. These hand-built stone structures were constructed by stacking piles of rock slabs and stones into various shapes and sizes across the Arctic landscape from Alaska to Greenland.

The Inuksuk is a cultural symbol of the Inuit and an emblem of the North. In today’s world, the name Inuksuk is also given to the piled stone monuments that have a head, body, legs, and arms. These human-like stone statues have moved far beyond the Arctic. For example, an Inuit-created Inuksuk sits in the lobby of the Canadian embassy in Washington, D.C. Three big Inuksuk greet people at the entrance to Terminal 1 at Toronto’s Pearson International Airport. Ilanaaq the Inuksuk was even the mascot of the 2010 Winter Olympics! The world’s largest stone Inuksuk, built in 2007 in Ontario, is 37.33 feet tall and weighs 90 tons.
How To:
Now that you know all about Inuksuk stone markers, learn how to build a replica of one!

Part 1: Go on a rock hunt
1. Grab a bag and walk around your backyard, neighborhood, or a local park to search for rocks. You will need to find about 5-10 rocks to build your Inuksuk.
2. These rocks can be any size, from a tiny pebble to a heavy rock that is bigger than your hand! Remember: you will eventually stack these rocks on top of one another, so rocks that have flat spots or edges will work best.
3. As you collect rocks on your rock hunt, do not take any that are in someone else’s yard or part of a park’s landscaping. Make sure that you only collect rocks that do not belong to anyone else!

Part 2: Construct an Inuksuk replica
1. Use the rocks that you collect in part 1 to create your own Inuksuk! Check out the photos below for inspiration as you try to pile all of your rocks on top of one another. You may find that they are not very easy to balance!

2. Now that you have created an Inuksuk replica, can you think of a way to use it? Could you design a hike through your backyard that uses Inuksuk trail markers? What about creating a scavenger hunt for your family or friends that uses a different rock arrangement for each stop?

Career Connection:
Structural engineers are concerned with the design and construction of all types of structures such as bridges, buildings, dams, tunnels, power plants, and space satellites. Structural engineers research the forces that will affect the structure, and then develop a design that allows it to withstand these forces.
Resources:
https://northernwilds.com/the-story-behind-the-roadside-inuksuk/

Image Sources:
https://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/wm3N00_Inukshuk_Canadian_Embassy_Washington_DC
https://northernwilds.com/the-story-behind-the-roadside-inuksuk/
https://www.blackcombpeaks.com/blog/whistler-inukshuk