



William B. Kemp (1936-2020)

Born and raised in Cincinnati, Ohio, Bill Kemp took his B.A. at Miami University (*aka* 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 came to McGill in 1970, quickly becoming an integral contributor to the department's developing Human Ecology program, bringing with him a special focus on the Indigenous Cultures of Canada's arctic and subarctic.

His interest in northern Canada predated his arrival here as in 1961 Bill and five fellow travelers carried a survey by canoe from Lake Athabasca to the mouth of the Coppermine River at Coronation Gulf on the Northwest Territories Arctic coast. From this first experience, he went on to Michigan State to study Inuit culture and prehistory under Dr. Moreau Maxwell. His research included archaeological fieldwork and eventually comprehensive ethnographic and cultural ecological studies with Inuit living in Northern Québec (now Nunavik) and the Lake Harbour-Kimmirut region of southern Baffin Island.

In his brief nine years at McGill, Bill solidified a research and advocacy relationship between the Department of Geography and the Inuit of Nunavik and Nunavut. This relationship endures to the present. Before he left McGill 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 (1999). At the same time, Bill played a major role in providing scientific support to the Inuit of Québec in the negotiations that culminated in the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement (1975).

In no small sense, Bill's voluminous knowledge of Inuit (he spoke Inuktitut), his research on the essential connection between Inuit and their homelands and his energy in advocating for Inuit contributed enormously to Canada's recognition of the rights of Inuit and the settlement of the nation's first modern treaties. Bill was an inspiration to the McGill graduate and undergraduate students whom he taught and mentored, many of whom remain committed to northern research and Indigenous advocacy. Amid conducting this extensive applied research, Bill published a seminal analysis in *Scientific American* on Inuit ecological adaptation and a comprehensive overview of Baffin Island Inuit culture in the *Arctic* volume of the *Handbook of the North American Indians*.

After he left McGill, Bill continued his close relationship with Inuit and was instrumental in establishing the Makivik Research Department to ensure that Nunavik Inuit could direct and be active in research. Central to this phase were a five-year Nunavik Land Use and Ecological Mapping Project, several Inuit-led wildlife surveys and the establishing of the lauded Makivik Research Centre.

Bill was a traveler at heart. Inspired by a trip to Croatia during the war, he divided his time between Zagreb and Montreal to work on the preservation of cultural heritage. He subsequently founded Strata360 to develop new computer-based methods to integrate Indigenous land use, ecological and cultural information. This took him to Belize where he worked with the Maya and Garifuna, and then to South Africa, Botswana and Namibia, mapping San (Bushman) heritage to support their land claims under a special mandate from Nelson Mandela. During the same period, he travelled extensively in Southeast Asia in support of efforts of local peoples to protect the Mekong River. He then worked in the same way along the length of the Nile River to its sources.

A cancer diagnosis in 2017 ended the travels but not the passion. He worked for two more years from home mentoring young mappers. In a touching message, a former student from McGill said "*May there be umiaks on ice flows and camelthorn acacias in the scorching deserts where you are going. Thank you for all the teachings. Thank you for caring so much about our world and the people in it.*" McGill University and the Department of Geography pass on our condolences to his wife Lorraine Brooke, children Ellen, Caroline and Andrew and to his friends and colleagues across Canada and around the world.