



# OOKPIK: THE OGLING OWL AT 50

## VIEWING GUIDE

Presented by  
the Intellectual  
Property Issues in  
Cultural Heritage  
Project

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Video URL: <http://bit.ly/1nYeM5D>

## SUMMARY

Fifty years ago the Canadian Government selected Ookpik to represent the country at the 1964 trade fair in Philadelphia. An overnight sensation, the Canadian Government moved quickly to trademark Ookpik for the Fort Chimo Eskimo Co-operative. While unsustainable in the long-run, the intentional commodification and heavy marketing of Ookpik represents an early attempt to create an income stream for and with Inuit.

## KEY CONCEPTS

Authentic, heritage, national symbol, industrial property, commodification, co-operation.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Where did the idea for Ookpik come from?
2. How was Ookpik marketed? What efforts were made to protect the design and image from appropriation?
3. Why do you think Ookpik was so popular? What caused it to become unpopular?
4. Several times Sue notes how people sought only the “authentic” or “real” Ookpik. What is meant by the term “authentic”? What counts as “inauthentic” in this context?
5. Ookpik, an Inuit creation, came to symbolize Canadian national identity. What are the benefits of using Indigenous heritage in nationalism? What problems might arise?
6. Susan describes this as one of the first examples of Indigenous-government cooperation in commodification and marketing. What were the motivations of and benefits for each group?



## ACTIVITY / ASSIGNMENT

### A. Ookpik and the 1967 Expo

1. Provide a short summary of how Ookpik came to be used for Expo.
2. Outline the perspectives of at least three different groups on this use of Ookpik.
3. Identify any relevant professional heritage association Codes of Ethics concerning this issue. How could these be used to resolve conflicts?
4. What is the current situation regarding the use of Ookpik? Was any conflict resolved?
5. Drawing on the points raised in Sue's presentation, what is your opinion on the use of the Ookpik by Expo? Would you have done anything differently? Why or why not?

### B. Indigenous Cultural Heritage and Professional Codes of Ethics

1. Identify five heritage/archaeological/anthropological organizations with Codes of Ethics (local, national and international).
2. Provide a summary of how each code addresses the responsibilities of professionals to a) heritage sites and objects, b) intangible heritage, c) Indigenous communities, and d) the public.
3. Do these codes address the issue of cultural commodification? If so, how?
4. How would you improve these codes to accommodate issues of appropriation and commodification? Use the issues and examples discussed by Sue to craft an additional statement addressing these concerns.

## RESOURCES

Carman, John (2005). *Against Cultural Property: Archaeology, Heritage and Ownership*. Duckworth: London, UK.

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Root, Deborah (1996). *Cannibal Culture: Art, Appropriation, and the Commodification of Difference*. Basic Books: New York, NY.

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