northern co-ordination and research centre department of northern affairs and national resources

THE CARIBOU ESKIMOS OF ESKIMO POINT

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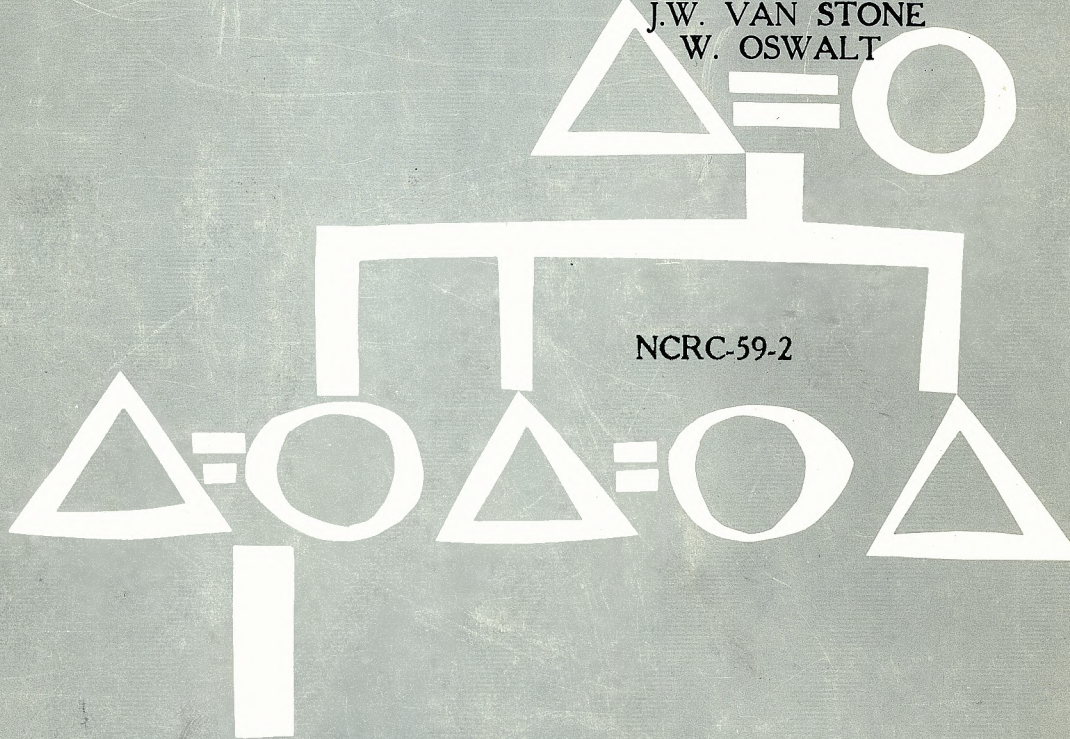

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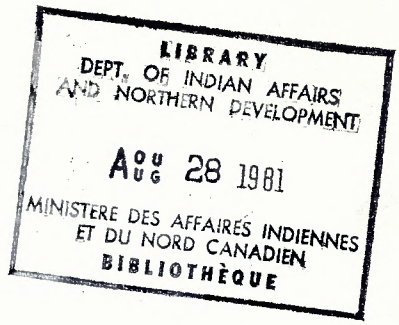

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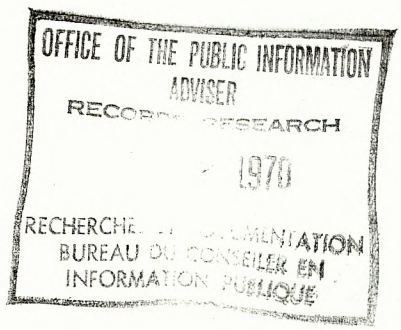

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The Caribou Eskimo Community of Eskimo Point

James Van Stone and Wendell Oswalt

Eskimo Point is the most important population, administrative, trading, and mission center for the Eskimos of western Hudson Bay between Churchill and Rankin Inlet. The community proper is located along a boulder strewn beachline which drops off toward a small inlet on the sea side to the north. To the south behind the community the land gives way to a series of lakes and sloughs, finally terminating at an opposite beach about two miles away. The surrounding flora consists primarily of grasses, mosses, and low growing vascular plants which typify the tundra of this area. A faunal inventory includes mainly the white fox, the migratory barren-ground caribou, ground squirrels and a few lemmings. Sea mammals frequenting the adjacent coast include the harbor seal, ringed seal, bearded seal, white whale (beluga) and, rarely, walrus. The only local fish of economic importance is the arctic char. In the summer there are migratory waterfowl including ducks, geese, and cranes in addition to shore birds and gulls.

At Eskimo Point there are three clearly defined and locally recognized population segments. The Caribou Eskimos are numerically the largest group, numbering around 165 individuals. Most of these people were born inland on the Barren Grounds, but others, especially the younger ones, were born at coastal camps. The second population segment consists of Eskimos who have come to the community from other Hudson Bay villages and their children; there are 30 such individuals in the community. A third group numbering 13, are of Western European descent; they are all connected with the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources (henceforth referred to as Northern Affairs) school, Anglican and Roman Catholic missions, Hudson's Bay Company or the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Only in very recent years has Eskimo Point had a permanent Eskimo population. The Padlimiut who inhabit the area are traditionally inland-dwelling people who come to the coast for only part of the spring and summer, if at all. [1] From the time Churchill was

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Footnotes to be found at the back of the report

established as a Hudson's Bay Company trading center in 1685, there has been intermittent contact between fur traders and some segments of the Caribou Eskimo population. Hearne traded with the Eskimos along the west coast of Hudson Bay before making his famous inland penetration of the country to the northwest of Churchill in the years 1769 through 1772.[2] It had long been a Hudson's Bay Company practice to send trading boats along the coast to meet with the Eskimos. Barges were later hauled along the coast with a powerboat and anchored near summer population concentrations. One such trading barge was anchored before Eskimo Point and attracted Padlimiut from the point itself, one of the larger islands on the opposite side of the inlet from Eskimo Point, and Sentry Island, all being favorable spots for summer camps. During 1923 a trading barge was wrecked off Eskimo Point, and in 1924 a permanent Hudson's Bay Company post was established there. In the same year the Roman Catholic mission was established, and the Anglican mission was founded in 1926. There was no Anglican missionary in residence from 1946 to 1957. During the summer of 1959 a Northern Affairs school was completed, and school began in the fall of that year.

In spite of the fact that the trading company, missions, and police have been located in the area for more than 20 years, it has only been within the past few years that the community has had a year-round Eskimo population. Formerly, and at present, many families range inland during the fall and winter, returning to the coast for the late spring and summer.

The intensity of contacts between Eskimo Point residents and the outside world fluctuates according to the season of the year. There is air service between Churchill and Eskimo Point on one day of each month. The schedule is kept reasonably well in the summer, but air transportation is unpredictable during the balance of the year. The planes carry freight, passengers and mail into the community. Other forms of predictable yearly contacts include the arrival of a medical party to X-ray the villagers and the coming of the Hudson's Bay Company supply ship.

Other contacts from beyond the community are less predictable but not infrequent. For example, Royal Canadian Mounted Police aircraft make frequent calls at Eskimo Point on business for the police or Northern Affairs. However, all of these forms of

interaction with persons beyond the village primarily involve the white settlers of Eskimo Point. The Eskimos' contacts with their own people are usually confined to the occasional arrival of a Peterhead boat in the summer or a dog team in the winter. Thus the Eskimos of the village have a low degree of intensity in contacts.

Settlement Pattern

The physical community has a very amorphous quality in so far as the Caribou Eskimo population is concerned. Virtually all these people live in canvas tents in the late spring, summer and fall. The most usual tent form is rectangular, but a few resemble the aboriginal cone-shaped structure. The early winter dwelling is usually a tent with snowblocks built up around the walls. Later a snowhouse is constructed as the typical winter dwelling. As the house site becomes littered with debris, the people move to another location. The initial location of a summer tent depends primarily upon which patches of ground are first free of snow, and upon the religious affiliation of the family. In general the Roman Catholic families camp near their mission and the Anglican families camp near their church, although there may be families of both denominations living beside the non-Christians along the ridge at the opposite end of the community.

The families of the two Eskimos who are special constables occupy two separate houses. These are frame structures and both belong to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. These families live in tents during the summer. The janitor of the new school will occupy a frame house near the school building. Three Eskimo families have winter dwellings constructed of odd pieces of wood, cardboard and tarpaulins; this form of semi-permanent structure is a recent innovation. In the community there are four other frame houses belonging to Eskimos. These are usually unoccupied throughout the year but are used for storage. They were built when fur prices were high and people had considerable sums of money, but the houses proved difficult to heat with the scanty fuel and heating facilities known to the Caribou Eskimos.

The other forty-odd structures belong to the Anglican church, the Roman Catholic church, the Hudson's Bay Company, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources, and to a mining company that has a temporary geological survey base camp at Eskimo Point.

The households are consistently those of nuclear or nuclear core families although in many instances near relatives live in adjacent tents. Two snowhouses with a common entrance may be occupied by a newly married couple and the parents of one of the couple. There is no physical cohesion among extended family members.

Subsistence Cycle

Two alternative cycles of subsistence activities prevail among the present Eskimo residents of Eskimo Point. One cycle is of aboriginal derivation, while the second is essentially sedentary and wholly new to the Caribou Eskimos. Somewhat less than half of the community members move to the barrens in late August to intercept the caribou as they migrate south for the winter. The people go inland by boat as family units. Some move north to the area where the Maguse River widens and forms the lower end of Maguse Lake; other families move to the McConnell River drainage, and some others move due west. Prior to moving inland, families may receive limited credit for staples such as flour, tea, sugar and ammunition from the Hudson's Bay Company store. Each hunter is sold only a hundred shells for a high powered rifle and a comparable number of 22 cal. rifle shells. This limitation is based upon the theory that if many caribou were intercepted and if there were an unlimited supply of shells available there might be a needless slaughter of more animals than necessary. In the event that large numbers of caribou do not pass by the inland camps, persons reasonably near the coast will leave their families and make a final trip to the sea to hunt bearded seal before returning inland for the winter. The men may also set out nets in the "fish lakes" for salmon trout. As the lakes freeze, individuals may jig for fish through the ice or reset their nets beneath the ice. Additionally, ptarmigan will be hunted during the winter. However, the intensity of any subsistence pursuit apart from caribou hunting is contingent upon how many caribou are taken. When these animals are numerous, all other subsistence pursuits become unimportant. As winter progresses and the snow begins to drift, snow blocks are cut and walls built around the tents. Later when the snow is the proper consistency for building a snowhouse, winter dwellings are constructed. Both tents and snowhouses are customarily heated with a primus stove.

An all-important winter activity is the trapping of white foxes which range from along the coastal ice to the interior of the Barren Grounds. Each man traps for himself, just as he hunts for himself, and the trap lines may take from one to three days to cover, often consisting of as many as one hundred sets. Most individuals have shorter lines and many fewer traps. Those persons trapping from Eskimo Point have a more limited range and less opportunity to take large numbers

of pelts. The mobility any individual has in trapping is contingent upon the number and condition of the dogs he owns. The size of one's dog team depends upon the amount of dog food available for the winter. If caribou are abundant inland and seals numerous along the coast, then a man may have a large team and be able to trap over a greater area and take more foxes than would be possible with fewer dogs. In 1957-58 there was a great scarcity of dog food, and most of the dogs died. Consequently, the majority of the families now have few animals, if any. This seriously limits their mobility, but the teams are slowly being rebuilt. Most men in isolated camps make weekly or monthly trips to Eskimo Point to trade their skins for supplies at the Hudson's Bay Company store and then return to their families at camp.

The number of foxes taken by Eskimo Point trappers varies greatly from year to year, but under favorable circumstances the good trappers may take from one to two hundred animals in a season and earn as much as $4000.00 in credit at the Hudson's Bay Company store. Expenses are high, however, and during the trapping season much food must be purchased as there is little opportunity for hunting. A long-time resident of the village has estimated that it takes from $600.00 to $800.00 to support an Eskimo family of four for one year. The accompanying chart indicates the number and value of the foxes, together with a few wolves and two polar bears, purchased by the Hudson's Bay Company from 1949 to the present and clearly indicates the fluctuations from year to year not only in the number of foxes trapped, but also in the prices received. In interpreting these statistics it should be kept in mind that occasionally the price to be obtained for pelts is higher at Churchill or Rankin Inlet, and when this is the case, some trappers take their fox skins to these communities.

Year	Number of Fox Skins	Value
1949-50	3,533	$13,420
1950-51	741	6,809
1951-52	1,630	9,361
1952-53	3,737	27,016
1953-54	5,459	53,148
1954-55	2,575	21,431
1955-56	2,958	27,871
1956-57	791	10,970
1957-58	869	11,495
1958-59	1,049	17,708

The fox trapping season ends on the 15th of April, and the men return to Eskimo Point with their families, bringing their boats and camping equipment back on sleds. They then camp at Eskimo Point in tents and go sealing at the edge of the floe ice, which is usually some seven miles from shore. On these hunting trips they carry their canoes over the ice by sled to open water and launch the canoe in a lead. Some canoes are propelled by outboard motors, and others are paddled. A few harbor seals are taken, but the hunters are most anxious to kill the bearded seal. This large bulky animal suns itself on the small ice pans at this time of the year and under proper conditions may be approached within a few yards and shot. In spite of the fact that seals are hunted and killed, they are not considered as really adequate human food. Most of the seal meat and fat is stored for thd dogs; the oil is not used in lamps.

After the ice melts and drifts from the small inlet to the north of the point, gill nets are set along the shores for arctic char. These fish are taken all summer but never in sufficient quantities to be dried and stored for winter; instead they serve as a day to day food. Not all the families own or set nets. In the summer white whales are hunted, but only the skin is eaten. The fat and meat are usually saved for dog food. Numerous ducks and geese migrate to the Eskimo Point area in the summer, but these are only occasionally hunted although the eggs may be gathered and eaten.

For the families that live at Eskimo Point all year the seasonal round of activities is quite different. The company, school, and police employees are in the community year-round and are the only Eskimo households with a predictable income. The other families remaining in the village throughout the year may venture a short distance inland to hunt caribou in the spring or fall, but these excursions are only of few days' duration. Such individuals also trap foxes near the village during the winter. Foxes are usually quite abundant along this section of the Hudson Bay coast, and in good years when fur prices are high an individual may obtain a great deal of trade goods. This has no doubt been an important factor in attracting families to remain at the coast during the winter. Other families living at Eskimo Point the year-round seem to be chronically unable to support themselves, and these individuals subsist upon direct government relief, or quasi-relief from the Anglican or Roman Catholic missions.

Opportunities for summer employment exist but are unpredictable. During the summer of 1959, for example, there were a few men helping the Northern Affairs construction crew build the new school, and two men accompanied a party of ornithologists to the McConnell River area to band migratory birds. There has been a tendency for a few individuals to go to Churchill and work for wages during the summer and to return to Eskimo Point for the winter, subsisting partially upon the money they have earned.

When unskilled jobs are available in the village, they are often delegated at the suggestion of the police, who arrange for the most destitute to receive the work. It does not seem to confer prestige of any sort to have such jobs; in fact, just the opposite is likely to be the case. In 1957 a group of men and their families, numbering approximately 100 individuals, moved to Rankin Inlet to work in the nickel mine, preferring steady wage work to the uncertainties of a subsistence-trapping economy. It has been said that the best hunters and trappers were the ones to migrate to Rankin Inlet.

The Eskimos benefit from a certain amount of unearned income, the most important of which is the family allowance that is payable to all citizens of Canada. A family receives $6.00 per month for each child until it reaches ten years of age and then $8.00 a month until the child is sixteen years old. Old persons and physically handicapped individuals may also draw special support from the government. Currently the relief, old age assistance and family allowance programs at Eskimo Point are administered by the police, and the total amount of relief and other aid is said unofficially to be approximately $9,000.00 a year.

Social Structure

The household is clearly the most important social unit in Caribou Eskimo society. Household membership, whether in a tent or snowhouse, is usually restricted to a nuclear family, but additional members may include one or more unmarried individuals closely related to the husband or wife. These residence units are often situated near similar dwellings of parents, inlaws, or siblings, and two closely related families may occupy snowhouses with a common entrance. As mentioned earlier, religious affiliation may determine where an individual will pitch his tent or build his snowhouse.

The household also serves as the most integrated economic unit. In each dwelling there is customarily a male hunter responsible for the welfare of his family. However, his responsibilities may be lightened if he has one or more sons who can also hunt and trap. Traditionally the men of a house have the sole responsibility for securing food. After the item is brought into the house, whether it is tea from the store or caribou from the tundra, it becomes the property of the woman of the family. Some families have retained this division of economic responsibility. In other dwellings subsistence responsibility is more diffuse, and both the husband and wife are concerned with food getting activities both in and out of the house.

The village of Eskimo Point is a physical community with certain continuities in time, but there is very little to indicate that among the Eskimos there exists any social feelings of community cohesiveness. Instead it appears that there are small social segments composed of individuals who interact casually with one another. The most frequent contacts are among persons of like social and/or religious ties. Not only do the Roman Catholic families live near one another during the summer, but they are likewise socially cohesive. The social hall of the Roman Catholic church is the habitual meeting place for adult church members and all village children. Some families gather here in the evenings to chat, play pool or Chinese checkers; others simply sit and watch the activities about them. One special attraction is the showing of motion pictures once a week when the films are available. In addition, there are daily services in the church which unite the members for ceremonial participation. The Anglican church social hall serves many of the same functions as that of the Roman Catholics, but is better equipped and better lighted, which makes it more attractive. One significant difference between the two is that dances are not held in the Roman Catholic social hall but are held in that of the Anglican church. There is less ceremonial participation on the part of the Anglican villagers since their church services are held only on Sunday.

Other factors tend to split the Eskimo population along religious lines. Competition between the two denominations has led to hard feelings between the missionaries. The villagers are clearly aware of this factionalism and tend to assume the same attitudes toward Eskimos of another faith. The attempt of each denomination to gather into its fold the most successful families leads to open competition. The religious split is perhaps more serious than it might have been since there was no resident Anglican missionary in the community from 1946 to 1957. The religious division among the Eskimos carries over into social life as Anglicans and Roman Catholics tend to marry those of the same religion.

Until this year the only schooling available to the village children was offered by the respective missions. There was and is boarding school also available for Roman Catholic students at Chesterfield Inlet and for some children at the Gospel Mission church at their Maguse River establishment. In all these schools religious activity, education,and subsistence welfare blend into one another.

Mention should be made of the non-Christians and their status in the religious life of the community. It would appear, at least superficially, that non-Christians may be fitted into two general categories. Either they are successful persons who are materially oriented and little interested in the spiritual value of Christianity or else they are what have been called "tea and tobacco natives". This is meant to convey that such individuals profess to be interested in whichever church is willing to supply them most liberally with tea, tobacco, and food. There is no doubt that some aboriginal religious concepts survive and may constitute a third element in the religious life of the community. It is doubtful, however, that they form a systematic body of belief competing with the Christian churches. Since food problems are sometimes critical, it is important that both churches distribute food or supplies to faithful members. This linkage between religious participation and subsistence welfare is an effective technique for gaining and holding participants.

The previously existing leadership complex among the Caribou Eskimos has virtually disappeared, but it is worthwhile recounting for a clearer understanding of the emerging pattern today. A leader is called ishwhomattapok which may be translated as "the one who is thinking". The foremost qualification necessary for a leader was that he be a good hunter, which is equated with being a thinking individual. Such a person assumed a leader's role by demonstrating repeatedly that he was capable of locating and killing caribou. By the time an individual of this nature was around thirty years old, families with less capable hunters, whether related or non-related, were attracted to his camp. A leader had no real authority and anyone in the camp was free to move as he saw fit. It was usually to his advantage, however, to follow the directions and suggestions of the ishwhomattapok. A leader with enduring success as a hunter would attract more and more people until he directed the activities of half a dozen or more families. He continued to be influential only so long as he was a successful hunter. He may or may not have consulted with other hunters depending upon how assured he felt in his position. As his ability as a leader failed, the attached families left him to shift for themselves or to join another leader. It was repeatedly stated that the leader made no effort to instruct a

younger male to replace him, and families who once had an influential leader often experienced a difficult time surviving after his abilities had begun to fail. Informants clearly stated that there are no real Eskimo leaders in the community today.

In retrospect it seems that aboriginal leaders became less important and finally non-existent when the people were drawn into the fox trapping economy. The Hudson's Bay Company manager controlled the supply of exotic foods and goods that the people soon came to regard as necessaties. The only product the Eskimos had to exchange for trade goods was fox pelts, and they were encouraged and even coerced into spending more and more time trapping these animals. There is very good reason to believe that the Hudson's Bay Company managers were authoritarian in their dealings with the Eskimos and that in the past the Eskimos were told what to do and when to do it. When fox prices were high the people had a great deal of credit, not cash, available, and this trade could only be carried on through the Hudson's Bay Company store. When the prices of foxes dropped, the people could not understand the change. Although the skins were always bought by the store, the prices paid were of course low making trapping unprofitable but still necessary for trade items. Under these circumstances, Eskimos were either unable or unwilling to return to their almost complete dependence upon caribou. When the Caribou Eskimos had developed needs that could be fulfilled only by trapping foxes, the Hudson's Bay Company manager became a real director of the activities of persons trading into his store. The managers were periodically transferred, and each one could interpret company policy according to his own experience and philosophy. Needless to say, the ambitious trader who brought in the most furs was the one likely to gain company recognition and advancement.

With the establishment of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police station at Eskimo Point another radical change came into village life, for the police constable became the official governmental representative in the area. Even though the Eskimos lived at the community only in the summer, the police ranged out and visited the isolated camps. Law enforcement was not a great problem and the police came to serve other functions. They administered the family allotments, relief funds and medical supplies. Thus they too became influential in determining the economic life of the people. As had happened with the Hudson's Bay Company manager, the police constable came to assume a position of authority and leadership. Direct control over individual affairs varied with the

particular constable stationed in the community. Some appear to have limited their intervention in village affairs to instances where intervention was clearly necessary, while others became minor dictators disrupting family life and making arbitrary decisions that took little or no account of the feelings or thoughts of the individual Eskimo involved.

The prevailing attitude among the persons of Western European descent at Eskimo Point is that the Eskimos are "just like children" and they must be led and directed. It is felt that the Eskimos will shy away from facing any problems unless someone is firm with them. When it is realized that aboriginal Eskimo life is a shadow in the background of the lives of these people and that control of Eskimo economic life is out of their hands, it is little wonder that Eskimo leaders have disappeared and been firmly and decisively replaced by police and company representatives.

Material Culture

The former way of life of the Caribou Eskimos required considerable physical mobility and under these circumstances the people accumulated relatively few material possessions, as may be noted in the monograph by Birket-Smith.[3] With an increase in physical stability, the Caribou Eskimos of Eskimo Point have not correspondingly increased their material possessions. The artifacts of a typical household would include a canvas tent as a summer dwelling and the ubiquitous primus stove for heating and cooking in the tent or winter snowhouse. Other household items include a low wooden bed frame, situated in the rear of the tent, upon which are placed caribou skins, blankets, and perhaps one or more sleeping bags. Near the walls and under the bed frame are small trunks and boxes containing out of season clothing and pieces of skins or cloth. There are cooking and eating utensils scattered about including at least one tea kettle, frying pans, pots and buckets in addition to a few cups, bowls and spoons. The woman also has her metal tin containing sewing equipment and an ulu-type knife for cutting skin. The man's equipment found in a dwelling includes various wood working tools, two or more rifles and an assortment of knives. Additionally many households own an accordion or phonograph. The family also possesses objects not kept in the house, such as fox traps, a sled and dogs, and perhaps even an outboard motor and canoe.

Clothing is the only other major complex of material culture items. The majority of clothes worn today are manufactured in the south and purchased through the store. This includes dresses, shirts, boots, socks, sweaters, jackets, etc. Additionally, certain garments are made from materials purchased at the store, such as light canvas for parka covers, cotton prints for dresses, and duffel for footwear. The habitual summer clothing for men and boys includes kamit or overshoes with duffel liners and socks, trousers and a cotton flannel shirt in addition to a jacket or parka cover. Winter clothing is made ideally from caribou skins and is of aboriginal cut, but the scarcity of skins makes this impossible. An effort is made to clothe at least the men in skin garments since they are most exposed to the weather. Even this has not been possible in recent years. Younger and older women commonly wear slacks with blouses and sweaters, while those of middle age tend to wear cotton print dresses. The women often wear kerchiefs on their heads or have a colorful shawl about their shoulders. Footwear for women consists of kamit, shoes, or snowpacks.

Village Health

The health facilities available to community members include in-village treatment, drawing upon locally available medical supplies. In emergency cases or when some chronic ailment is suspected, the patient is sent free of charge to a hospital in the south. These health services are made available to the Eskimo through the Indian and Northern Health Services of the Department of National Health and Welfare. The community medical supplies are currently administered by a registered nurse. She is a part-time employee of the Indian and Northern Health Services and is the wife of the Hudson's Bay Company trader. When the nurse considers that an Eskimo requires hospital attention, she normally sends him by scheduled or police aircraft to the Churchill hospital. Here the patient is examined and either sent to another hospital farther south or returned to the village.

In-village treatment consists of administering drugs to patients at a clinic which is held on week-day mornings in one room of the storekeeper's house. Prior to the arrival of the nurse two years ago, the police gave out medicines, and at various times the mission representatives have served the same function.

Those individuals hospitalized at the time of the study were under treatment for tuberculosis (7), leg deformity (1), a cardiac condition (1) and respiratory ailments (2). One other individual's illness was as yet undiagnosed. The total population from which these hospitalized individuals were drawn was 236.

NOTES

1. For a comprehensive account of these people as they lived in the early 1920's see Birket-Smith, 1929.

2. Tyrrell, 1911, p. 3; Tyrrell, 1934, p. 27.

3. Birket-Smith 1929.

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The Future of the Caribou Eskimos

by

Wendell Oswalt and James W. Van Stone

The Caribou Eskimos, living in the Keewatin District of the Canadian Northwest Territories, are the largest group of Canadian Eskimos to maintain their cultural and social identity down to the present day. At the same time they are unquestionably the most primitive of all Eskimos, and in all probability they have continued to follow their old way of life more successfully than any other group of aboriginal Americans north of Mexico. However, as might be expected, these people are currently undergoing rapid and drastic changes in their traditional way of life. Since the Canadian government has only very recently begun to more than tacitly admit the existence of these people, it is highly appropriate to consider what the future holds for this last enclave of Eskimo society.

The future of any dependent people is largely in the hands of the government that exercises control over them. If these people are "uncommitted" politically but socially aggressive, they may be able to exercise some control over their future. But a people like the Caribou Eskimos, who are numerically few and are scattered over hundreds of square miles in an area with little economic or political significance, may be simply an unimportant minority. In some ways the Caribou Eskimos are fortunate; due to their isolation, they have been able to maintain their cultural identity, and additionally, Canada is keenly aware of the problems involving minority peoples. Recently the Canadian government has developed an awareness of the Northwest Territories, and to speak of an "awakening interest in the north" is more than a phrase. This attitude is backed up by a great deal of time and money and by the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources. The reason for this change in official government attitude need not concern us, but the way in which the Caribou Eskimos are to fit into the changing tempo of northern life is of central importance.

Previously the Canadian Eskimos were submitted to a form of authoritarian paternalism administered by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Hudson's Bay Company and, to a greater or lesser degree, by the Anglican and Roman Catholic missions. Now, largely through the efforts of the Department of Northern Affairs and

National Resources, there is a conscious attempt to "make the Eskimo a fully participating Canadian citizen". The problems concerning Canadian Eskimos brought into focus in this paper are 1) to define the current government policies toward the Eskimos; 2) to interpret these policies in light of possible means for changing Eskimo life; and 3) to consider how such changes could be implemented among the Caribou Eskimos at Eskimo Point, the largest concentration of these people.

Canadian Government Policies toward the Eskimos

A brief review of official published statements concerned with Eskimo administration facilitates an understanding of current attitudes; such a summary is required before any specific recommendations can be offered. The subsequent recommendations, drawn from anthropological experience, are in keeping with the spirit of avowed government policy statements. Since the general policies of the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources are not designed to subjugate or exploit the people involved, the authors feel no qualms about participating in the program and making recommendations for change.

In the annual report of the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources for 1954-55 a section is devoted to the Eskimos. Here it is acknowledged that only recently has there been an awareness of Eskimo needs. Bringing the Eskimos into contact with elements of Canadian culture requires adjustments in their traditional way of life; "this adjustment does not have to mean the loss of Eskimo culture" but will be conditioned by local circumstances. Furthermore, it is considered advisable not only to furnish such benefits of Canadian citizenship as old age security and family allowance, but to consider the more comprehensive interrelated need for a sound economy, better educational facilities and health services. . A pressing problem fully recognized is that of stabilizing the economy so that the people are not dependent upon the fluctuating price of furs for their economic well-being. Furthermore, "it seems clear that an effort to place the direction of local affairs in the hands of the Eskimos is desirable" and at the same time outsiders with positions of authority should have less power in the villages.[1]

The views expressed by L.H. Nicholson, a member of the Northwest Territories Council, at the Council opening in Ottawa in January of 1959, constitute a recent semi-official statement of current government attitudes.[2] The address opens with a brief appraisal of economic, educational, housing and health conditions as they currently exist. Nicholson then speaks of the Eskimos' future and states that planning is not for tomorrow "but for ten or

twenty years hence" and further "we don't want a generation of uneducated Eskimos while job opportunities in the North go begging." Elaborating upon Eskimo economics, Nicholson comments that currently there are a total of some 10,300 individual Eskimos in the north. Of this number some 3000 are adult males of whom 450 are employed, 150 in the hospitals and 1500 should be capable of living off the land. Since there are 6,600 wage earners in the Northwest Territories and northern Quebec, "we want 900 jobs for Eskimos from this total of 6,600 and 900 Eskimos competent to fill these jobs". Furthermore, in Nicholson's statement we find that he considers it most important that the government should take firm steps, if necessary, to keep the people from clustering about white centers of population unless both jobs and housing are available. Finally, it is stated that "these things should be tackled with all possible attention to the Eskimo's own wishes and participation. He must never be looked upon as a curiosity but as a man and a Canadian."

This semi-official policy statement is an articulate expression of concern over Eskimo welfare; from it a number of significant policy factors emerge. First, it appears that changes are not to be considered in light of immediate stop-gap measures, but with a view toward long range planning for the future. Implicit in this approach is the fact that the Eskimo communities will continue as on-going social and economic units with at least half the population continuing to follow a modified aboriginal subsistence economy. At the same time an increased value will be placed upon education so that more persons can support themselves by wage labor. There is, however, some ambiguity in the views expressed, for it is inconsistent to give all possible attention sincerely to the desires of the Eskimos and at the same time take firm steps toward preventing individuals from going to the cities without the assurance of jobs and housing. Likewise, if planning is for the future, why not consider a broad program of education rather than being concerned with jobs for the 900 men that cannot support themselves adequately by any other means? Surely this is only short term stop-gap planning if living conditions among the Eskimos are to be bettered.

The central theme expressed in Nicholson's address seems to be that the Eskimos should be drawn into Canadian national life but at the same time be encouraged to retain their cultural identity and integrity. These may be incompatible ends, but assuming that they are not, they might be attained through a long range program of education and through the encouragement of factors that would strengthen their identity as Eskimos.

Viewing the treatment of dependent peoples in general, it seems that one of two basic attitudes may be assumed. In theory it is possible to isolate a people from contact with the outside world through rigid control over travel and trade in the area. This artificial containment is virtually always a temporary measure and is so unrealistic that it is rarely attempted. The only notable and recent pursual of this form of administration in the arctic was directed by Bogoras with reference to the peoples of eastern Siberia, but this policy only prevailed from 1924 through 1930.[3]

A second view of contact situations with Europeans is that assimilation of the aboriginal people is inevitable in the process of increased national control. Assimilation, however, may be envisioned as either a rapid or slow process, and varying views concerning the rapidity with which indigenous peoples should be amalgamated into national life are widely held throughout the world today. Often it is felt that rapid assimilation is good for one people but unsatisfactory for their neighbors or even that the problem should be resolved on an individual basis. It would seem that Nicholson considers that assimilation should be most rapid for those persons seeking wage-labor employment; the others would be slowly assimilated while remaining on a subsistence economy. Thus the assimilation would be both slow and rapid depending upon local economic conditions.

From this address it is apparent that at least selective assimilation would be favored by employing Eskimos for wage-labor jobs in the north. It is also apparent that in so far as possible, the Eskimos are to continue to live off the country so that proximity to areas in which wage labor is available is an important factor in formulating changes at the community level. The desire to have Eskimos retain their cultural identity seems evident. Any exodus to the urban centers is ruled out, while education is clearly recognized as a need if a portion of the population is to fit into a wage economy.

Government Policy and Avenues of Change

When general policy statements are converted into concrete innovative devices, it is obvious that alternative means for action are possible. The guiding purposes or "needs" felt by the government in directing Eskimo affairs can be defined as first, imparting Canadian values and second, the encouragement of Eskimo cultural identity. The implementation of these two

values in terms of community programs for change need not be mutually exclusive. Education in Canadian ways is actually a process of changing the nature of some of those things that Eskimo society deems important, in other words to change certain values held by the society's members. The obvious device for enculturating the Eskimos with Canadian values would be the introduction of formal schools both for children and adults. This is hardly a startling suggestion; it is only a statement of basic method while the specific educative techniques may vary tremendously. Educating Eskimos in formal schools has already begun, and in some localities schools have long been a part of village life. In the past, however, education has been mainly associated with missions and religion and only secondarily with making the Eskimos more fully participating citizens.

If the Eskimos are to be drawn into Canadian life, it is necessary to break down the linguistic barrier that separates them from the people with whom they have most contact--the English-speaking Canadian. This need not mean the abandonment of Eskimo as a language but rather a striving for a bilingual population. It has been repeatedly demonstrated in many areas of the world that the soundest approach to the formal education of nonliterate peoples is to first make them literate in their own language and then teach them a second language.[4] However, the practicality of such a language program among the Canadian Eskimos may be questioned from the standpoint of obtaining adequately trained teachers. It is feasible for persons speaking only English to teach it to the Eskimos, but it is a slow and laborious process for both the teacher and the students. It usually means that a child must attend school for two or three years before he is capable of starting first grade work. None the less, experience in Alaska among Bureau of Indian Affairs teachers demonstrates that in less than twenty years a significant segment of the population is capable of understanding and speaking English.

In order to ensure the continuation of Eskimo culture and society there must be a radical change in the social life of these people. The existing pattern in which community leadership is in the hands of mission, police and trading company officials must be changed if Eskimos are to retain their cultural identity. It would be unrealistic to advocate a return to aboriginal social life, but it is realistic to strengthen and develop Eskimo community organization through the introduction of new institutions.

The specifics of aboriginal social life, the existing situation and future potential of a community will be discussed at length with reference to the Padlimiut at Eskimo Point.[5] At present it is only necessary to accept tentatively the fact that social and cultural disorganization have resulted from the long established policy for dealing with the Canadian Eskimos.[6] If Eskimo society is to continue to function, community life must become better integrated and the people encouraged to solve their own problems rather than turn to some government, company or mission representative. At present there are numerous Eskimo communities with very little social consciousness beyond the extended family level, and feeling of in-group cohesion are minimal. It is only through the fostering of cohesive attitudes that the communities can develop any vitality and continuity. This sort of village integration can be developed most feasibly through an organization, with village-wide representation, that would have very real control over local activities. A village council organization with democratic elections could serve as a real local point for village life if such an organization would recieve the encouragement of the government and its agents.

The Current Social and Economic Scene at Eskimo Point

In an effort to show how the proposed educative and integrative devices may be introduced on the village level, each will be discussed with reference to the Eskimo Point settlement. It should be clearly realized that the comments to follow are not intended as a condemnation of past Caribou Eskimo administration, but rather represent an attempt to show how the new policy attitudes are quite different from those pursued previously. If the comments on the Hudson's Bay Company, the RCMP and the Roman Catholic and Anglican mission activities seem critical, it is only because they conflict with the new goals of northern administration.

The literature on the Caribou Eskimo, while not voluminous, is rather complete. Birket-Smith (1929) has presented a full account of Padlimiut life under essentially aboriginal conditions, and Gabus (1944) has published on the culture as it existed in the late 1930's. Likewise, the popular book "People of the Deer" (Mowatt, 1952) has attracted considerable attention to the problems of the Caribou Eskimo. Mowatt's book we consider to be a piece of journalistic description rather than an authoritative anthropological account.

Studies specifically concerned with Eskimo Point include only the rather specialized study of Caribou Eskimo legal practices by van den Steenhoven (1958) and a paper concerned with current (1959) Eskimo Point culture and society by the authors (ms). The summary of Eskimo Point life presented here is largely drawn from the authors' study of this community.

The largest concentration of Caribou Eskimos today is clustered in and near the village of Eskimo Point on the western shore of Hudson Bay. There are some 100 Padlimiut as year-round residents of this village and approximately 60 others that spend at least part of each year in this settlement. Additionally, 30 Eskimos living in the community permanently are non-Padlimiut, and 13 other individuals are of western European descent. It should be added that more and more families are moving into the settlement. During the fall of 1959, for example, two families in the Padlei area planned to move to Eskimo Point. Whether they did or not is not known, but the important fact is that they were seriously considering leaving their traditional inland home for the coast. It also seems likely that within a few years, when the nickel mine at Rankin Inlet ceases to function, at least some of the hundred odd persons that went there from Eskimo Point in 1957 will return to the settlement. There is every reason to believe that the permanent population will grow due to the influx of new families and with the increasingly sedentary existence of the families living there part of the year today. At the present time approximately 120 Caribou Eskimos live year-round on the Barren Grounds and subsist primarily upon caribou. These people live either in the vicinity of the Hudson's Bay Company post at Padlei or around the shores of Yathkyed Lake. It seems probably that they too will be drawn to the coast during the next few years.

Within the community of Eskimo Point the household units are composed consistently of a man, his wife and children, sometimes with the addition of a few individuals closely related either to the husband or wife. For most of the Eskimos, the residence unit is a tent from late spring until late fall and a snow-house in the winter. A few Eskimo families have flimsy cardboard, tarpaulin and wooden structures for winter, while those that work for the school or police live in substantial frame houses as do all the residents of European descent. The dwellings are arranged along a raised beach line with the non-Christian families clustering at the opposite end of the village from the missions, while the Roman Catholic and Anglican families tend to cluster near their respective missions. The Eskimo families with a member working for the school, police or trading company live near their jobs on land

clearly defined as belonging to these organizations. Thus among the various population segments there is a physical separation based upon employment, religious affinity and personal preference.

A further look at village social life reveals that the nuclear family is the most important social and economic unit of the society. The male heads of such families are responsible for the behavior of household members, and they are usually the sole providers. The obligations toward persons outside this unit are minimal. Beyond the bonds of intimate family ties are those based upon friendship, and friends tend to be persons of like religious convictions who are, at the same time, usually neighbors. There is every indication that village-wide social unity does not exist. No organization or activity draws everyone together as a participant. The nearest approach to social integration is in the infrequent village dances and village-wide participation in helping to unload the fall supply ship.

It is not surprising that in this social milieu Eskimo leadership is poorly developed beyond the family level and no one individual represents a significant segment of the population. The only discernible leaders are the whites who control political, economic, and religious activities. Since there is a trading monopoly in this area, the Hudson's Bay Company trader is a very real leader, for he controls credit and the distribution of desirable goods from the outside world. The same is true of the police who are the distributors of relief and family allowance credit, which again must be spent through the Hudson's Bay Company store. It is to these organizations that the villager is forced to turn for virtually all economic goods that cannot be taken from the local environment by the existing subsistence activities.

The churches also exercise a degree of control over the economy of some villagers by distributing food to those families that are faithful church members and who may or may not work for the church. When it is realized that virtually all of the villagers function within an essentially subsistence-trade economy, the control exercised by non-Eskimos gives these individuals an opportunity to direct both economic and some non-economic facets of village life.

A further analysis of community subsistence activities demonstrates the presence of two primary forms of yearly subsistence cycle. Some families live at Eskimo Point year-round and range inland only a short distance, if at all, to hunt caribou or to set a line of fox traps. Others move inland during the fall to intercept the southward migration of caribou and then stay inland to trap for the balance of the winter, finally returning to Eskimo Point in the late spring. Both groups hunt for seal along the edge of the flow ice during the spring and set out gill nets for arctic char in the summer.

At the time of historic contact only part of the Caribou Eskimos left their inland caribou hunting areas in the Barren Grounds and came to the coast for spring sealing and summer fishing. However, after the establishment of a store at Eskimo Point in 1924, more and more families came to the coast during the summer, and after the arrival of the supply ship, they purchased their winter supply of manufactured items and certain foods before returning inland for the balance of the year.

In recent years the attraction to coastal life at Eskimo Point has increased. The people have become drawn more and more into a fox trapping-trading economy, and along this area of the coast foxes are normally abundant. Then too, in recent years, the people have failed to intercept the migrating caribou and faced starvation. They know that at Eskimo Point, where there is a store, the police and missions, they will not starve. This has been an additional attraction to the village in times of stress. All these factors contributed to the growing concentration of people in this community and the abandonment of their aboriginal way of life.

The traditional focus upon caribou hunting to the virtual exclusion of all other subsistence activities apart from lake fishing has become modified by the inclusion of fox-trapping. When fox prices are high and caribou scarce, there is additional incentive to turn away from the pursuit of caribou to dependence on an animal that has no food value. This is particularly true since the people have placed an increasing value upon those manufactured items and food staples which may be received only in exchange for fox pelts. So long as the fox prices are high and the animals plentiful, these felt needs can be fulfilled. When prices are low and the animals scarce, there is a tendency not to revert to hunting caribou inland but toward an increased reliance upon sea mammal hunting and government aid.

In summary, it seems apparent that Eskimo Point is a physical community with little social integration above the family level. Eskimo feeling of cohesion or unifying to face common problems hardly exist. The police, churches and store do represent focal points of village social and economic life, but these are dominated and controlled by non-Eskimo agents. It is little wonder that Eskimo Point is an unorganized community, for there is no precedent in aboriginal Padlimiut social organization for the structuring of the activities of such a large population. Rather than encourage the development of village-wide institutions in which the Eskimos could participate and cultivate some sense of local unity, the police, missions, and store have each attempted to promote their own vested interests. Within this system the Eskimo is the perennial loser. Particularly disheartening is the fact that the people cannot really anticipate the attitudes of the whites, especially those of the police and traders. These individuals are always being rotated to other stations, and each constable or manager may interpret his obligations toward the people quite differently. One constable may be a tyrant, concerning himself with every facet of village life. The next may be concerned only with police business, but by the time the people know what to expect, the individual has gone to another station and the process begins all over again.

If Eskimo Point is to remain as a physical community, which seems highly probable, and if the Eskimos residents are to maintain their cultural identity and emerge from their current lethargic state, then it is necessary to develop feelings of purpose and mutual responsibility on the community level.

Specific Recommendations for Changes at Eskimo Point

The Physical Village

Today the community is arranged around the missions, store, police and newly constructed school. Each of these organizations has its own plot of ground clearly defined with boundary markers. For the Eskimos to build their snowhouses or pitch their tents upon any of these plots, it is first necessary to receive permission to do so from the organization involved. Only police employees live on police ground and only members of the Anglican Church live on church grounds, etc. Logically enough, when these organizations established themselves at Eskimo Point, they located on the best available sites so that the Eskimos must live in less desirable locations unless they are associated with one of the entrenched organizations.

It would be appropriate to set aside an area for the villages alone since these boundary maintaining mechanisms are well established and not likely to change. The only remaining desirable plot of land is inland from the school site. The villagers should be encouraged to live along this section of the raised beach which is already the home of some families. This would give the people a sense of physical identity and could be a first step toward increased social identification with one another.

Dwellings

With the more sedentary nature of village life, a greater number of permanent dwellings may be anticipated. This, in fact, has already begun with the erection of cardboard-tarpaulin-wooden shacks by three families. Considering the cold winds that blow across the point, it would seem necessary for the people to have more substantial dwellings than the canvas tents in which most families live for about half of the year. The snow at Eskimo Point is often not suitable for building snowhouses until well into December. It should be possible to introduce more substantial dwelling units, preferably small, perhaps twelve feet square with low ceilings, and well constructed against the weather. A house of this size would approximate that of larger tents and could serve as a storage place in the summer when the people would doubtless prefer to live in tents. The real difficulty is in heating such structures, but this is already a major problem for the people living at Eskimo Point. Even using the existing heating method, a primus stove, well-built permanent houses would be warmer than tents or snowhouses. The current experiments with suitable arctic housing for the Eskimos being conducted by the Canadian government may offer some positive solution to the housing and heating problem. If permanent houses could be introduced, it would be best to cluster them in one section of the community in keeping with the foregoing recommendation concerning the physical settlement.

Developing Social Autonomy

If the government is sincere in its desire to further the social well-being and viability of the people at Eskimo Point, one of the first steps toward this end should be the encouragement of local self-government. This is conceived of in terms of a village council with limited jurisdiction over the community. Such an organization

would have elected representatives and clearly defined powers. The purposes of such an organization would be defeated if it were without real authority. The villagers themselves must be the ones to determine what action is necessary when confronted by particular problems. It is realized of course that serious crimes within the Canadian legal system could not be handled by such an organization, but it would be highly desirable to have the council exercise control over everyday problems that confront the community such as loose dogs, thefts, village sanitation, etc. These are all matters currently dealt with by the police. It would be of little value to have an organization of this sort without some degree of local power. The primary failing of village councils among Alaskan Eskimos, for example, is that they can make decisions but have no power to enforce them. The organizations thus become sounding boards for village opinions and handle only comparatively insignificant village matters.

Acknowledging that many of the council's activities will involve the members with Canadian government officials and other non-Eskimos, one special office within the organization should be filled by an English-speaking Eskimo to serve as an intermediary between the whites and the council itself. It is suggested that a special representative of this nature be elected in order to formally channel contacts with outsiders into the village council. If this is not done, and perhaps even if it is, the council *per se* may become a buffer organization in dealing with whites and actual community leadership would be as amorphous as ever.

The council should have some physical locus which would be symbolic of the organization and functional for the community. Such a locus could be a council or community building in which meetings and village social events could be held. A community hall of this nature need not be a large or elaborate structure, but it would seem to be another step necessary for drawing the villages together. Every effort should be made to have the community hall constructed at the time the council is organized.

The means by which village social and economic life at Eskimo Point is dominated and controlled by non-Eskimo agents has already been discussed. The removal of this condition appears to be essential from the standpoint of developing local autonomy, and the eventual stationing of a Northern Service Officer in the community will doubtless mean that the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources will become increasingly involved with these matters.

Although it is doubtless essential that the distribution of relief be handled through a government agency, the distribution of other forms of unearned income should be placed in the hands of the villagers themselves. In Alaska, for instance, the United States Department of Public Welfare has found it advisable to appoint a welfare agent for each village, and while in some cases a local resident of European extraction holds the position, whenever possible it is given to a villager. This system has worked well in the majority of cases. The family allowance payments at Eskimo Point, which are at present handled by the police and distributed as credit at the Hudson's Bay Company, should be made by cheque to the individual recipients. Since the majority of payments in Canada are made in this manner, it seems only a matter of time before control of this aspect of the economy passes into the hands of the villagers. Although the money will still be spent at the Hudson's Bay Company, the Eskimos are sure to gain from the experience of handling cash and determining their own purchases.

Many regulatory functions at present being carried out by the police could be satisfactorily handled by the villagers, particularly after a village council organization becomes operative. Once local self-government has been established and a sense of community cohesiveness begins to develop, the representatives of the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources will find that they can most usefully serve the community by acting in an advisory capacity in matters affecting the welfare of the villagers. In this way they will avoid substituting one form of paternalism and authoritarianism for another.

Education

Since the federal day school, newly established at Eskimo Point in the fall of 1959, is certain to be a factor in increasing and stabilizing the coastal population, it should be one focal point for developing concepts of community integration. The advantages and difficulties of making children literate in the Eskimo language have already been mentioned. Although the problems involved in following a program of this kind appear at present to be insurmountable, it should be kept in mind that when education in the Canadian arctic has advanced to a certain point, it may be possible to train local individuals who are native speakers as "teachers' aides" who could begin a program of literacy in the local dialect and at the same time work toward the eventual indigenization of the educational process.

If the school is to be a truly dynamic force in village life, educational opportunities should be made available to adults as well as children. This might take the form of guidance and instruction in adequate diet, hygiene, and infant and maternal care. Guidance and help in problems of community organization could be provided by the school teacher in co-operation with emerging village leaders. A school-centered recreational program for adults would also help considerably in establishing community cohesiveness.

For educative devices to be fully meaningful to the villagers they should at least in part be linked with local subsistence activities. For example, it is readily acknowledged that most men at Eskimo Point are not proficient sea mammal hunters. This is fully understandable with their previous inland orientation. However, if they are to live permanently at Eskimo Point they must rapidly acquire proficiency in exploiting the resources of the sea. The school representatives could attempt to introduce more efficient hunting and fishing techniques drawn from the experience of more long established coastal dwellers. Training as sea mammal hunters hould also be a part of the school curriculum since young boys will no longer have the same opportunity to accompany elders on hunting trips as they could prior to the establishment of the school.

Another example of a manner in which the school could increase the economic potential of the hunters would be to encourage and oversee the construction of lightweight sea-going dories. Relatively few persons in the community today own sea-worthy round-bottom canoes of the type common to Hudson Bay. These are expensive to buy and rather difficult to repair. Lightweight plywood dories could be built locally and serve as more efficient sea craft.

The new school at Eskimo Point faces some problems that would not emerge in more settled communities. Significant in this regard is the fact that regular school attendance conflicts with the type of semi-sedentary existence that is associated with caribou hunting and is still practised by a number of village families. Even the families who make only occasional excursions into the interior to hunt desire to take their children with them, and this may mean an absence from school for as much as two or three weeks. There is probably no ideal solution to this problem, but it is very doubtful whether enforced attendance regulations would be effective. Prepared lessons to be completed by the child while away from the village might be a partial answer, particularly on an advanced grade level, and there is some indication that this plan may be carried out at Eskimo Point.

Schools are being established at Eskimo Point and other arctic communities on the principle that government subsidized education should be made available to the Eskimos as it is to other citizens of Canada. In accordance with this principle, the emphasis should be on convincing the Eskimos that the school is being operated for them as an integral part of their community life. They should be encouraged to feel that the school facilities are for their benefit and use and that the interests and goals of the school teacher are their interests and goals. At Eskimo Point the task of instilling the values and objectives of education will be a slow and difficult one, and because of this, the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources, as well as the local school teacher, should be satisfied with slow progress during the first few years. It is the opinion of the authors that if as many as half of the eligible children attend school regularly during the first two or even three years of its existence, the educational authorities should have reason to be satisfied. As the residents gain in understanding of educational goals and a sense of community develops, school attendance will increase and it will be possible for adult members of the community to participate in some administrative aspects of the educational process with the teacher acting in an advisory capacity. When this point is reached, the school will then be fully integrated into the community fabric.

A Community Store

The innovation of a community-owned and managed store is no doubt outside the realm of possibility at present, but it should be considered in future planning. Current Hudson's Bay Company control over the economy of Eskimo Point residents is not dissimilar to "company stores" in mining towns, with all the accompanying abuses. If community members are to receive full measure for their labor, then it is necessary to introduce competitive trading establishments or perhaps still better to introduce a community-operated trading establishment.

In Alaska a nonprofit co-operative purchasing agency operated through the Department of the Interior enables villages to borrow money for starting stores. The debt is paid according to a repayment schedule that is set up at the time the loan is made and occasionally modified depending upon the success of the undertaking. Merchandise and equipment are purchased through the government agency, and profits are applied toward repayment and increasing the purchasing power of the stores. When the debt is paid, the stores then become co-operatives owned and operated by village residents, and profits are usually used to institute civic improvements that benefit the village as a whole.

Most of the co-operative stores in Alaska do a strictly cash business but also handle furs and products of local manufacture in exchange for merchandise. The storekeeper is always a villager, and the people come to feel that the store has their own interests at heart and is not an outside agency with which they have a dependency relationship. At Eskimo Point, the establishment of such a store, in addition to its value as an integrative force, would familiarize the people with some of the problems of operating within a money economy, a concept that is completely foreign to them at the present time.

It is rather striking that the Eskimo Point store inventory comprises items of short utility. This type of stock was probably the most satisfactory when the Caribou Eskimos were highly mobile, but with increasing community stability it would be desirable for any local store to begin stocking goods with greater durability. It is startling to visit Eskimo families and see their material poverty while knowing at the same time that the head of the family may have sold the store as much as $4,000.00 worth of furs in a single year.

These suggestions with regard to a community store are doubtless unrealistic in light of current Hudson's Bay Company control, and current village awareness of the value and uses of money, However, a village-owned and managed store would be in line with the acknowledged aim of the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources to help the Eskimos to participate in their own future after the manner of other Canadians. Whether or not the Canadian government desires to go into competition with private business is another matter and outside the scope of the present discussion.

Post Office

All communities in Canada's eastern arctic would benefit by more regular mail service. However, until post offices are established in the villages, mail delivery will continue to be erratic. As far as Eskimo Point is concerned, the establishment of regular postal service would not only facilitate the carrying out of a number of governmental activities, but would be an important acculturative factor from the standpoint of the villagers. Of particular importance in this regard would be the opportunity for the Eskimos to receive mail order catalogues and make purchases of various kinds through the mail. Although this is theoretically possible at present, the delays and difficulties involved make it virtually impossible. Letters from friends and relatives in hospitals or other

villages would surely increase with regular mail service and form an important connecting link between Eskimo Point and the outside world. The broadening of village purchasing power through the extensive use of mail order catalogues would be another important factor in learning to operate within the framework of a money economy.

Relocation

As has been previously mentioned, population of Eskimo Point undoubtedly will continue to grow as more families leave the interior to take up permanent residence on the coast. The general level of economic resources in the region suggests that an increase in population may result in subsistence hardship for a least some of the villagers. This fact, together with the growing awareness of the advantages of wage labor, makes some resettlement program essential for those who desire to leave the area. Re-settlement in the arctic is already a part of government policy, and numerous families have taken advantage of the opportunity to resettle at Rankin Inlet and work in the nickel mine.

Although resettlement in the arctic has solved and will continue to solve a number of economic problems, consideration should be given to the fact that some individuals might be able to make a better adjustment in the more urban areas of Canada. The goal of any relocation program should concern itself with more than the physical aspects of moving people from one place to another. Primarily, it should strive to make it possible for those who wish to leave the village to make an adjustment to life outside. As a part of any such program at Eskimo Point, the Eskimos should be fully informed of the problems involved in relocation and the types of adjustment they will have to make. This is conceived of as being largely an educative process rather than a selling process and should be begun before and carried on long after the actual relocation has taken place. Careful guidance in the problems and pitfalls of urban readjustment should make it possible for many Eskimos to become integrated into urban Canadian communities. It should be emphasized that the federal school can play an important part in this process through its adult education program. Education for life outside the village can be combined with guidance programs aimed at developing community leadership, organization and self-government.

Representatives of the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources

No matter how well conceived government policies toward the Eskimos may be, the values held by the top administrators must be effectively disseminated to the field representatives or else the specifics of the policies will be doomed to failure. This requires a "mobility of ideas" through the bureaucratic hierarchy. A superficial evaluation indicates that such mobility exists, and this organizational feature clearly should be maintained. The field representatives must not only have the same values as the top administrators, but they must be able to convert them into the solution of day-to-day village problems.

It is apparent that capable field personnel must be recruited. Since the prevailing policy is to encourage villagers to handle their own affairs, it would be a mistake to hire representatives who are authoritarian in their dealings with the people. This is precisely what the police and Hudson's Bay Company agents have done for years. In the village setting it would be tempting for the field representative to assume an authoritarian attitude, for this is the course that has proven affective in the past and the one to which the Eskimos have become accustomed. This must be avoided except in extenuating circumstances.

Ideal field representatives would be individuals with some northern experience together with training in the social sciences. Unfortunately, this particular combination of experience and education is not common, and doubtless compromises will have to be made. At any rate, all individuals applying for teaching and administrative jobs in the north should be expected to hold the same values as do the top administrators of the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources.

Summary

An acknowledged aim of federal administration in the Northwest Territories is to bring the benefits of Canadian citizenship to the Eskimo population within the framework of local cultures and environment. To aid in achieving this goal at Eskimo Point, a number of suggestions have been advanced, the purposes of which are to create a feeling of village solidarity by developing leadership and a sense of community awareness. Once this point of view has been installed, it should be possible for the community itself to be responsible for most aspects of its administration.

NOTES

1. Annual Report, Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources, 1955, pp. 10-15.

2. Nicholson, 1959, pp. 20-24.

3. Kolarz, 1954, pp. 65-67.

4. Thompson, 1951, pp. 62-63.

5. See Preceding Article.

6. Van Stone and Oswalt, ms.

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