

Donald B. Macmillan and the Polar Eskimos 1913-1917

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INTRODUCTION

Donald Baxter MacMillan began working in the Arctic in 1908, and his career as an explorer and educator continued until 1954, when he stopped sailing north. He pioneered the use of airplanes, radios, electricity, and other western technologies in the eastern Canadian Arctic and in Greenland. In addition, he built and supported a school for Inuit children in Nain, Labrador, befriended Inuit, Innu, and settlers in the region, and became a key advisor to the Navy regarding Arctic matters. He remained an influential figure in Arctic studies until his death in 1970. Initially, MacMillan organized voyages of exploration and scientific investigation, later he traveled north to service settlements and educate college students. Throughout his career he documented the cultural and technological changes that were transforming many northern communities. This paper examines two forms of culture contact between a group of Americans and Polar Eskimos. MacMillan and other members of the Crocker Land Expedition lived in direct contact with the Polar Eskimos for four years (1913-1917). The paper reviews how MacMillan's preconceived notions about the Polar Eskimos affected the course of cross-cultural interaction and documents his changing attitudes toward and relations with them. This analysis is achieved through reference to MacMillan's personal journals, as well as publications written by expedition members. The second part of the paper focuses on MacMillan's representation of Polar Eskimo culture to the American public. He wrote numerous books and articles, and

delivered hundreds of illustrated lectures, providing many Americans with their first intimate, though remote view of northern lifeways. Through this indirect contact Americans formed views of Polar Eskimos and other hunting peoples and made assumptions about the nature of humanity.

CROCKER LAND

In July 1906, while standing at the summit of Cape Thomas Hubbard on the northwestern tip of Axel Heiberg Island (Figure 1), Robert E. Peary looked northwest and saw snow-clad mountains spanning across the horizon. Believing that he had discovered new land, and mindful of honoring those who backed his expeditions, he called the region Crocker Land, after George Crocker, a major benefactor of the Peary Arctic Club.

In the early 1900s people speculated about what lay west of Grant Land and Axel Heiberg Island. R. A. Harris, of the United States Coast and Geodetic Survey, studied tides, the drifts of the *Fram* and *Jeannette*, and driftwood deposition patterns and concluded that land existed between Banks Island and Grant Land. He placed it northwest of Grant Land based on Peary's 1906 sighting of Crocker Land's peaks, the explorer's observations of animal tracks around the 87th parallel, and a shallow sounding at latitude 85° 23' obtained by a scientist on Peary's 1908-09 expedition (Harris 1913).

By 1912 both Peary and Frederick A. Cook had made their North Pole claims, and Roald

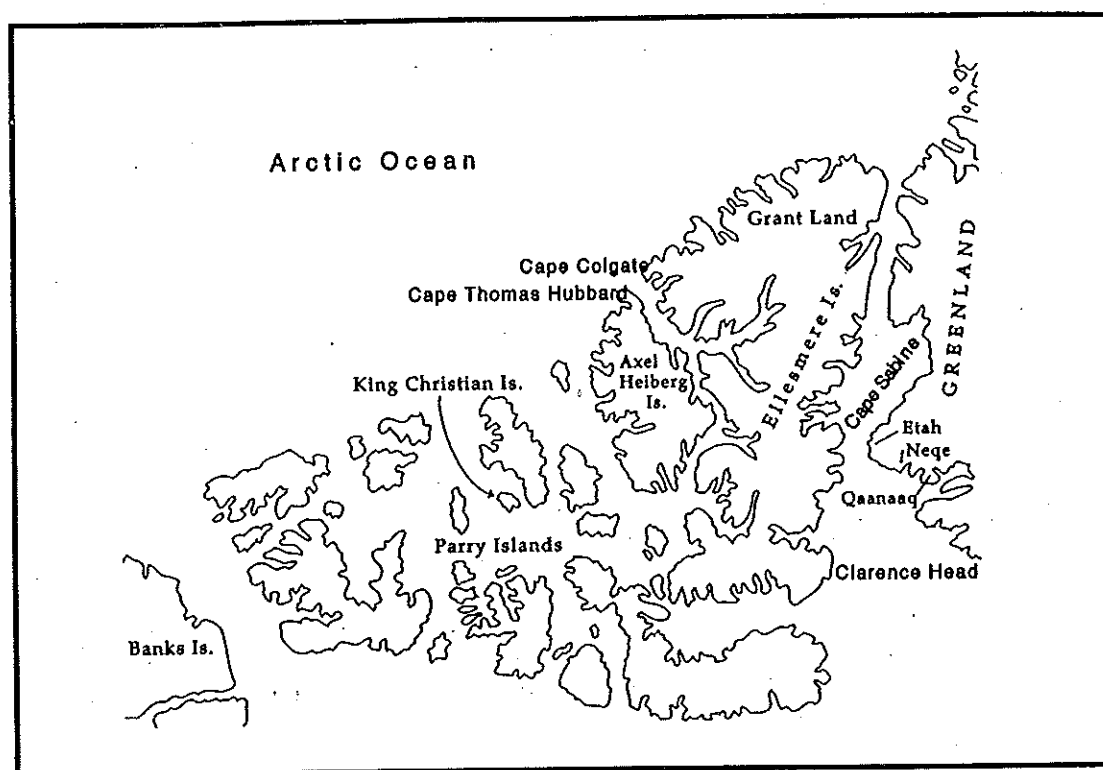


Figure 1. The eastern Canadian Arctic and Northwest Greenland.

Amundsen and Robert Scott had independently reached the South Pole. Peary discussed the challenges facing Arctic explorers and wrote:

Crocker Land easily takes first rank among problems demanding exploration, now that the Poles have been reached and that the insularity of Greenland has been determined....(Peary 1912:159)

He predicted that Crocker Land would "...become the gateway to other lands or seas represented by the large blank space on the maps between the North Pole and Bering Strait" (Peary 1912:159).

Donald B. MacMillan, who had been a crew member on Peary's 1908-09 North Pole expedition, decided to verify the existence of and investigate the nature of Crocker Land. Originally, he planned to launch a small expedition on his own. George Borup, who had also participated in the 1908-09 North Pole expedition, convinced MacMillan to postpone the trip for a year so they could work together, as well as marshal support for the venture from The

American Museum of Natural History, where Borup was an assistant curator of geology (MacMillan 1918:xiv).

Borup died in a boating accident in April 1912 (Hovey 1912:156) and the expedition was postponed for another year while MacMillan and The American Museum of Natural History formulated new plans. MacMillan and Edmund Otis Hovey, curator of geology at the Museum, fought for control of the expedition which now had the institution's imprint on it (MacMillan 1921). This leadership conflict would resurface when both men were in North Greenland.

While preparations for the Crocker Land expedition were underway, the United States' expectations concerning the important fuel and mineral resources that might be found on Crocker Land grew. Thus, the expedition's mission expanded, additional scientific staff members were added to the team (Hovey 1912:309), and the project gained the support of the American Geographical Society and the University of Illinois.

Ultimately, there were seven members of the expedition. W. Elmer Ekblaw, a graduate of the University of Illinois where he was an instructor

of geology, was placed in charge of the geological and botanical work (Anon. 1913a:12). Maurice C. Tanquary, also from the University of Illinois where he received a Ph.D. in zoology, was asked to conduct fish and mammal studies. Fitzhugh Green, an ensign who graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy, was assigned to assist with geology and glaciology work (Hovey 1912:309) and to study meteorology, seismology, and terrestrial magnetism (Anon. 1913a:14). Jerome Lee Allen, an electrician, was detailed to the expedition by the Navy. He was to run the wireless and other electrical machinery, and was in charge of meteorological and seismological work at the expedition headquarters when Green was traveling (Anon. 1913a:15). Harrison L. Hunt, a surgeon who received his medical degree from Bowdoin College, signed on as the expedition doctor (Anon. 1913b:3; Hovey April 1913:179-182), and Jonathan C. Small was enlisted to serve as the expedition's general mechanic and cook. MacMillan, also a Bowdoin College graduate, taught in preparatory schools before joining Peary's 1908-09 expedition and had spent part of a year studying anthropology at Harvard University. He was designated the leader of the expedition with specific duties to direct the exploration aspects of the work as well as undertake ethnographic research among the native people (Anon. 1913a:11).

EXPLORATION STRATEGIES AND ATTITUDES

The Crocker Land Expedition prospectus, published in 1913, identified four major goals. They were:

1. to reach Crocker Land, map its coast, and explore the region;
2. to explore west and southwest of Axel Heiberg Island and north of the Parry Islands;
3. to penetrate the interior of Greenland at its widest part and study the meteorology, glaciology, and summit of the ice cap; and
4. to study the geology, glaciology, meteorology, terrestrial magnetism, electrical phenomena, seismology, zoology, botany, oceanography, ethnology, and archaeology above the 77th parallel.

MacMillan modeled the expedition after Peary's 1908-09 North Pole venture. He planned to have Polar Eskimo assistants working with his crew, who would learn to live and travel like the

northerners. MacMillan formulated his plans based on the assumption that the Polar Eskimos would transfer the respect and loyalty they had for Peary to him, since he was now the head of the only American expedition in the area. He assumed that the Polar Eskimos would not only remember him, but would welcome his return. This is rather surprising, for he was a minor figure on the 1908-09 expedition.

These assumptions are clear in MacMillan's description of his expedition, published in *Four Years in the White North* (1918). He wrote that when the expedition ship's anchor dropped and Polar Eskimos approached, "One face looked familiar. Yes it was faithful old Kai-o-ta, my traveling companion on the Polar Sea...." (MacMillan 1925:18). He went on to state that Qujuuttaq (Kai-o-ta) "...informed me of the whereabouts of the boys whom I wanted as dog-drivers and general assistants - the boys who had been waiting now for four years upon my promise to return and lead them far west to a new land" (MacMillan 1918:18).

MacMillan had not overlooked the importance of western materials to the North Greenland people. Like Peary, he planned to provide western goods to the Polar Eskimos in exchange for their services. However, MacMillan faced problems at the outset. First, he had not understood that the trust, respect, and loyalty shown Peary and Matthew Henson, Peary's assistant, in 1908-09 were the result of over 18 years of association and northern experience. In addition, both men had local wives and, whether they realized it or not, they were linked into a kinship-based labor pool. MacMillan had no such history and from the Polar Eskimo perspective he was a relatively inexperienced northern traveler.

The idea of securing services from Polar Eskimos in exchange for western goods was also undermined by the presence at North Star Bay of the Thule Trading Station as well as the recent arrival of missionaries. Knud Rasmussen had just established the station and Peter Freuchen managed it, and both men had strong local ties. Whereas Peary had enjoyed a monopoly on western goods, MacMillan faced competition from people well integrated into the local communities.

MacMillan and his men built their house and headquarters, called Borup Lodge, at Etah. Throughout the next three months they shared the house and its environs with Polar Eskimos



Figure 2. Major sledging trips made by Crocker Land Expedition members.

who were hunting and sewing for them, and making expedition sledges. During this period the Americans introduced the Eskimos to electricity, the telephone, and the Victrola, and spent most evenings entertaining them with games and tricks (DBM No.16:34-92). The emphasis on entertainment was no accident. MacMillan had been very successful in keeping the Polar Eskimos on Peary's 1908-09 expedition amused and happy when their patience was tried.

MacMillan suggested that his men learn to drive dog teams and cultivate friendships among the Polar Eskimos (Green 1928:468). In preparation for their trip to Crocker Land they tested Peary-designed alcohol stoves, ate local foods, and went trapping and egg collecting with the natives. However, MacMillan's journals suggest that he never evaluated the fitness of various men or the workability of the American-Polar Eskimo teams that would participate in the Crocker Land venture.

Journal references to the upcoming trip are few and consist of a statement that all but two of the local men wanted to accompany MacMillan

on the trip (DBM No.16:93-94) and accounts of establishing provision stations along the route to Cape Thomas Hubbard (DBM No.16:98, 101). The report that Uutaq, one of the men who went to the North Pole with Peary and a highly respected individual, wanted to participate in the venture must have pleased MacMillan (DBM No.16:95), for this gave the enterprise credibility among the Polar Eskimos. However, when the first sledges departed Borup Lodge, the white men were inexperienced travelers, and they and the Polar Eskimos had not worked together outdoors for any significant amount of time. Ultimately, the Americans' inexperience and the lack of cultural understanding between the two groups would have tragic consequences.

TO THE ARCTIC OCEAN AND BACK

MacMillan adopted the Peary method of travel and scheduled teams of men to leave headquarters on separate days with orders to establish caches en route. On February 7, 1914 the first two divisions left Borup Lodge. This same day one of the Polar Eskimos came down with the mumps, another with influenza (DBM

No.16:137). Despite these outbreaks MacMillan launched the expedition, later writing "But I would permit nothing to interfere with our plans" (MacMillan 1918:49). On February 17, 1914 MacMillan, who was the last to leave, encountered the advance teams camped with no plans to proceed. The dogs were sick and seriously weak. Many of the men were totally debilitated with influenza or the mumps.

In the published version of this incident MacMillan wrote that in addition to being ill, some of the local men "...had cold feet literally and figuratively..." (MacMillan 1918:53). He cited the poor condition of the dogs as a major concern, though he did not discuss the cause of the animals' deteriorated condition. However, in his personal journal he admitted that the dogs' distress was due to the expedition's salty pemmican, which was giving the dogs diarrhea.

MacMillan wrote that he "...decided to retreat to Etah and there eliminate the sick, the chicken-hearted, and the older, and, consequently, the more influential Eskimos" (MacMillan 1918:54). In fact, MacMillan had no choice about proceeding. Green, in his journal, reported that Uutaaq led the Inuit in their refusal to continue the journey (DBM No.24:Feb. 15-17, 1914).

Upon his return to Borup Lodge MacMillan paired down his team to include Ekblaw, Green, himself, and six Polar Eskimos. He carefully excluded the older, respected men who he saw as a challenge to his authority. In a letter to Borup's father he wrote "Two or three of Peary's old veterans were doing too much talking so I decided to fire them at once". (Anon.1916:122). The men selected for the trip were Minik, a bilingual young man who as a boy had lived in New York (see Harper 1986); Piugaattoq, a highly respected individual who had crossed the glaciated terrain they were about to traverse; Ittukusuk, who had traveled with Frederick A. Cook; and Tautsiannnguaq, Arklio, and Nukappiannguaq, who were strong young men.

MacMillan's journal reveals that he was totally dependent on the Polar Eskimos during the journey to Cape Thomas Hubbard. For instance, the route required that they go over Beitstad Glacier (Figure 2). MacMillan wrote that when he first saw it "The ascent of the face of this glacier looked to me impossible. I wondered how it was to be accomplished" (DBM No.17:16). Piugaattoq and Qujuuttaq, who traveled with them part of the way, expertly cut steps up the

glacier, with each step having a raised edge which a person grasped. Ittukusuk quickly built the igloos the men slept in, and all the Polar Eskimos went hunting regularly, supplying men and dogs with fresh meat.

At Cape Thomas Hubbard the party was reduced to four men, Green, MacMillan, Ittukusuk, and Piugaattoq. Minik and Tautsiannnguaq had turned back on their own initiative at Beitstad Glacier, Arklio and Nukappiannguaq were sent back after they finished establishing caches, and Ekblaw returned to Borup Lodge after freezing his feet.

In both his published narratives and personal journals, MacMillan acknowledged the Polar Eskimos' superior traveling skills. For instance, when describing how the men surveyed the Polar Sea they were about to cross to reach Crocker Land, he stated, "With eyes better than mine, they [Polar Eskimos] were not only seeing the same things which I saw, but were seeing something more—open water" (MacMillan 1918:75).

The Polar Eskimos were reluctant to venture onto the sea ice due to the lateness of the season and the amount of open water already visible. In a pattern that would be repeated many times, MacMillan insisted on ignoring their advice. In this instance he openly admitted that he shamed them into continuing by remarking that the ice was in better condition than when he ventured onto it with Peary (MacMillan 1918:75).

The trip was unpleasant and dangerous. The men encountered numerous leads and dogs broke through the thin ice which was bending and buckling "like rubber" (DBM No.17:59). On April 21, Green sighted Crocker Land on the horizon. MacMillan wrote "There it was as plain as day—hills, valleys, and ice cap—a tremendous land extending through 150 degrees of the horizon" (DBM No.17:61-62).

MacMillan asked Piugaattoq to identify the best route to take to reach this land. The experienced traveler astonished him by replying that he thought they were seeing mist. MacMillan admitted that "As we watched it more narrowly its appearance slowly changed from time to time so we were forced to the conclusion that it was a mirage of the sea ice" (DBM No.17:62).

Despite the amount of open water around them and the realization that they had been seeing a mirage, MacMillan decided to proceed still further the next day. The Polar Eskimos stopped traveling an hour earlier than their instructions called for, angering MacMillan. That

evening Piugaattoq told Macmillan that he was going back to land. MacMillan wrote that he confronted Piugaattoq and told him "...he was not going back but was going on just as far as I was and the sooner he covered our distance the sooner we would start back" (DBM No.17:63).

On April 23, Green determined that the team should be standing on Crocker Land if it existed, yet there was no land in sight. MacMillan later wrote, "My dreams of the last four years were merely dreams; my hopes had ended in bitter disappointment" (MacMillan 1918:84). In fact, the major purpose of the expedition had literally vanished before his eyes.

The men had crossed thirty-four leads and were short of supplies when they turned back toward Cape Thomas Hubbard. Again MacMillan relied on Piugaattoq's and Ittukusuk's traveling skills, but he became angry with them when he realized that Ittukusuk had lost the outgoing trail in the blowing snow and was traveling by dead reckoning. He sent the two men in opposite directions to find the sledge tracks, while he and Green waited. Ittukusuk found the trail and the journey continued. MacMillan acknowledged his companions' skills when he wrote that "Time and time again we missed it [the trail] but the sharp eyes of the Eskimos picked it up again" (DBM No.17:68).

The men reached shore without experiencing a major mishap and they all agreed that they had been extremely lucky. At the same time, MacMillan must have felt some pressure to return to New York with something to show for the money, time, and energy invested in the expedition. His next set of decisions appear to have reflected that concern.

TRAGEDY ON LAND

The men had three days worth of food and were exhausted. In his published narrative MacMillan reported that he decided to proceed to Cape Colgate with Ittukusuk to retrieve a record left there by the explorer Otto Sverdrup. He instructed Green and Piugaattoq to travel west and explore the unknown coastline of Axel Heiberg Land (MacMillan 1918:89), which was one of the expedition's objectives. He did not report that the Eskimos, Piugaattoq in particular, did not want to travel, because a bad storm was approaching (MacMillan to Brainard 1914). MacMillan insisted that the teams leave at once and told Green and Piugaattoq to travel west for two days and then return.

Soon after the teams separated a fierce storm overtook both parties. Ironically, MacMillan admitted that he was helpless. But Ittukusuk found the remains of an igloo the team had built on the northern trip. The two remained in it for two days as the storm raged. Ittukusuk kept the igloo, which was being buried in snow, ventilated. And when the storm was over he undertook a ten hour journey in search of food while MacMillan waited in the shelter (MacMillan 1918:91).

Piugaattoq and Green were not as lucky as the other party. In his diary Green reported that when the storm hit Piugaattoq desperately dug out a shelter in a snow bank where he and Green took cover. Repeatedly Green was almost buried in the snow, but Piugaattoq kept a pocket of air open for him. At one point Piugaattoq freed his dogs from their harnesses, but Green's were left tethered to his sledge (DBM No.24:April 30, 1914).

When the storm ended, Green's dogs and sledge were deeply buried and the men had only one dog team at their disposal. Piugaattoq decided to head back to the place where they were to meet MacMillan. Green, not desiring to return empty handed, wanted to continue on their mission. The men argued and were driven back into the dugout when a second storm hit. At this point, according to Green, Piugaattoq expressed his displeasure with MacMillan and his trading practices. He also stated that MacMillan favored Ittukusuk to him, obviously smarting from the earlier encounter on the ice and having to work with Green (DBM No.24:April 30, 1914).

Another argument ensued over authority. The men's cultural conceptions of leadership and individual autonomy were in conflict, and neither understood the seemingly irrational behavior of the other. Green asserted that in MacMillan's absence he, Green, was in charge, and the American insisted that they continue their trip. Piugaattoq announced that he had had enough of the expedition and was going to return to Etah. Given his military background, Green assumed that he was the leader of the party and was furious when, from his perspective, Piugaattoq challenged him. However, according to local tradition Piugaattoq had every right to go home and every reason to expect that the less experienced man would go along with his judgement or proceed on his own.

Piugaattoq began traveling by sledge and Green on foot. Green could not keep up with the sledge and rejected Piugaattoq's suggestion that he travel on it, for the American feared that his wet feet would freeze. Piugaattoq would not slow down. Green, worried that in the blowing snow he would be unable to follow the sledge tracks, threatened Piugaattoq with a rifle and demanded that he follow behind Green. Ultimately the American, panicked and convinced that he was being abandoned, killed Piugaattoq who was sledging away from him (DBM No.24: May 1, 1914).

Harper (1986) and Vaughan (1991) discuss these events and present them from slightly different perspectives. But the conclusions are the same. Green and Piugaattoq had little understanding of one another's culture. From Green's perspective the Polar Eskimo was being insubordinate and unreasonable. However, Piugaattoq, in addition to exercising his right to travel when and where he wished, was acting rationally by removing himself from a dangerous confrontational situation.

MacMillan, upon hearing of Piugaattoq's death wrote that:

Green, inexperienced in the handling of Eskimos, and failing to understand their motives and temperament, had felt it necessary to shoot his companion. (MacMillan 1918:92)

Fearing reprisals from the Polar Eskimos, MacMillan told them that Piugaattoq had been lost in the blizzard that had stranded both parties. The Polar Eskimos never believed him and assumed that Green had murdered Piugaattoq, for they observed that Green had designs on the victim's wife (Freuchen 1954:128-132; Kale Peary, pers. comm. 1988). Harper (1986:202) reports that Ittukusuk, who understood English, overheard Green tell MacMillan what had happened, and communicated the real story to the community. Thus ended the 72 day expedition in search of Crocker Land.

A CHANGING PERSPECTIVE

The first relief expedition that was supposed to carry the Americans home failed to reach Etah due to heavy ice conditions off the West Greenland coast. MacMillan continued to explore the coastlines, mapping geological features and

recovering messages left by other explorers. He interviewed the men who had traveled with Cook regarding the route that party traversed and spent a considerable amount of time and energy photographing the region and its people.

In 1915, while traveling with Tanquary, MacMillan stayed with a woman he met in 1909 and learned a great deal about Polar Eskimos traditions. He became inspired with this line of work and decided to remain in the area another year in order to do intensive ethnography (DBM No.17:262).

Throughout this period his relations with his fellow expedition members became strained. They were sorely disappointed that they could not go home and they objected to the fact that MacMillan was trading their dwindling western food supplies to the Polar Eskimos for fox furs, which he planned to sell in New York to subsidize expedition overexpenditures. MacMillan had made geographic exploration the expedition's priority, frustrating the natural scientists (Hunt and Thompson 1989:75) who were thus denied the resources to do their work. Finally, MacMillan placed the best of the expedition's equipment at Ekblaw's disposal, and this energetic and enthusiastic individual did geological and botanical work (DBM No.17:303; Ekblaw 1918:334).

In May 1915, MacMillan undertook a major sledge trip from Etah to Humboldt Glacier (DBM No.18:25, 47). He thought that he might have to return to the United States on the relief ship expected that summer, so he distributed western goods to the Polar Eskimos who had helped him during his stay in Greenland (DBM No.18:67).

By mid-August the relief ship had not arrived. While the others waited for the vessel, MacMillan made plans to spend six weeks of the coming winter in Neqe, where he was going to do ethnographic research. Finally, the *George B. Cluett*, a Grenfell Labrador schooner and the second relief expedition vessel sent by the Museum, arrived in North Star Bay, 125 miles south of Etah. However, the season was advanced and the vessel was unable to reach Etah due to heavy ice conditions. The ship carried provisions for two years, so MacMillan determined that he could remain in Greenland another year (Anon.1916:121). The rest of the crew except Small, who volunteered to stay with MacMillan, and Hunt, who was on a lengthy trip, were to leave immediately for home. The departing Americans distributed "gifts" to the Polar

Eskimos who had helped them and went to North Star Bay to board the ship.

In early November 1915, MacMillan traveled with a group of Polar Eskimos secure in the knowledge that he was free of expedition leadership problems. His attitude toward the Polar Eskimos appears to have been quite different from that expressed on the Crocker Land trip. For instance, when his companions informed him that ice conditions made it inadvisable to travel, MacMillan accepted their judgement without question (DBM No.18:206-07).

At Qaanaaq, MacMillan learned from Uutaq that the Americans had decided that the *Cluett* was not seaworthy and had not left, and the ship was now iced in. Hovey and the famous ice navigator George Comer, who had traveled north of the vessel, would now require food, housing, and assistance from MacMillan. Frustrated by this turn of events, MacMillan wrote, "My two years plans were of no avail now. They must all be given up. This was the hardest blow of all" (DBM No.18:209).

MacMillan's already strained relations with his fellow Americans were made worse by Hovey's presence. Hovey assumed he was the senior official in charge of the men, while MacMillan believed that he remained the expedition leader. And the other men were thoroughly confused as to whose orders they should follow (Hunt and Thompson 1980:78). Increasingly, MacMillan spent his time with the Polar Eskimos. Leadership issues plagued him, but whereas before his problems had been with the Polar Eskimos, they were now with the other Americans.

To make matters worse the group was short supplies and the Polar Eskimos determined that if they traded with Freuchen they could make better deals. Also, Hovey was relying on the Thule Trading Station manager for supplies and services, and he paid Freuchen with the fox skins (at a fraction of their value) MacMillan had accumulated through trade with the Eskimos (MacMillan to Osborne 1921).

In the spring of 1916, MacMillan and a group of Polar Eskimos embarked on a trip to Finlay Land (King Christian Island), 470 miles from Etah. They were gone 56 days and covered 1350 statute miles (DBM No.19:66). Upon his return to Etah, MacMillan continued to do photography, record Polar Eskimo women singing, and collect natural history, archaeological, and ethnographic

specimens (DBM No.19:119). Meanwhile, the Museum had chartered the *Danmark*, already on the coast, to pick up the men. It too was caught in ice at North Star Bay (Bridgman 1916:291).

In August 1916 tensions again mounted among the expedition members as they awaited the arrival of another relief ship. The men made contingency plans to proceed south by various other means while MacMillan planned to remain in North Greenland another year. He was now critically short of tradeable supplies, so he informed many of the Polar Eskimos who had been working for him and living off a combination of their hunting efforts and his stores that he could no longer pay for their services or supply them food. He made one exception, saying he would always provide for "Sammie," Piugaattoq's son (DBM No.19:189).

By late fall 1916 the relief ship had not yet arrived. Tanquary, Green, and Allen had traveled south to catch a ship to Copenhagen. Ekblaw spent much of his time in North Star Bay, living with Eskimos and the missionaries. Hunt was at the Thule station caring for Freuchen, who was ill. Small, Hovey, and Comer were with MacMillan at Borup Lodge. While the others anxiously sought ways to get home, MacMillan looked forward to another season working in the North.

Throughout the winter of 1917, MacMillan became particularly close with Sammie, Ittukusuk, and Arklio. In addition to documenting vast sections of the coast on film, he and his native companions mapped 55 glaciers between Cape Sabine and Clarence Head (DBM No.22:49).

Finally on July 31, 1917, Robert Bartlett, the famous navigator who had maneuvered Peary's expedition ship the *Roosevelt* through the Greenland ice, arrived in the *Neptune* and anchored near Borup Lodge. The Etah headquarters were closed, and the *Neptune* proceeded south, picking up other members of the expedition at various points along the West Greenland coast. Then the ship headed southwest, arriving at Turnavik East, on the Labrador coast, the 22nd of August, 1917.

THE POLAR ESKIMOS AS SEEN IN THE UNITED STATES

MacMillan's unpublished journals reveal that he changed his perceptions of and relations with the Polar Eskimos during his four year stay in their homeland. He arrived arrogant, and left

with a sense of gratitude and respect for his hosts and friends. However, he had left the United States with the identity of an explorer. He did not bring home the prize, the exploration of Crocker Land, yet he had done extensive traveling and mapping.

The public had followed *The American Museum Journal's* accounts of the problems faced by the expedition in articles with titles like, "Is the Crocker Land Party Living like Eskimo?" (Anon. 1916) and "Crocker Land Party Safe" (Anon. 1917), which presented stereotypical views of both the native northerners and explorers. MacMillan appears to have chosen to report on the expedition's activities and his experiences in keeping with the tone of the *Journal* articles. He emphasized geographic discovery, heroic sledging accomplishments, and the crew's ability to deal with predicaments. He did not fully disclose the nature of his experiences. Rather than emphasizing the Polar Eskimos' skills and his heavy dependence on them, he portrayed the northerners as primitive people, thereby elevating himself above them.

This is best seen in an article he wrote on North Greenland food supplies, published in *The Museum Journal* in 1918. On the first page of this article he brought together aspects of Polar Eskimo subsistence activities which would most shock the American public. He wrote:

The naked child on the bed platform is sucking a frozen egg; the mother is ripping the skin from the body of a frozen dovkie; the father holds in one hand a piece of raw bear meat, in the other, pure fat —bread and butter to an Eskimo. (MacMillan 1918a: 161)

In his longer narrative of the expedition, published the same year, he referred to the Polar Eskimos as "cave-men" who were really living in the stone age (MacMillan 1918b:31).

MacMillan also portrayed the Polar Eskimos as more noble and honorable than civilized peoples. Indeed, he considered that contact with westerners was polluting them culturally and genetically. He wrote:

What ideal traveling companions the Eskimos are! Children in their simplicity, men of iron in their make-up. Tireless and fearless; happy and confident; honest and faithful; savage, yet full of kindness

of heart; ignorant, yet truly educated; lawless, yet lawful; immoral, yet shaming the moral; healthy, strong, vigorous, intelligent —such is the primitive man who knows nothing of our boastful civilization. (MacMillan 1918b:226)

MacMillan's portrayal of the Polar Eskimos in this manner, despite his experiences during the previous four years, was in part due to his racial beliefs. Throughout his journals he referenced the work of J. Deniker whose book, *The Races of Man*, was published in 1912. In this work Deniker presented the "states of civilization" and classified hunters as "savage peoples" (Deniker 1912:127).

Also, MacMillan was reacting to his sudden return to a world at war. His article on food opened with a number of references to World War I, and at one point he contrasted the food and fuel problems created by the war with Polar Eskimos life, noting that while great nations struggled the Eskimos "...in their warm rock huts beneath turf, grass, skins, and snow, are singing the long dark night away, and talking of the white man in the south who has gone 'pi-block-to' (run amuck)" (MacMillan 1918b:161). And in a narrative in his larger work he seemed rather melancholy about the state of the civilized world when he wrote:

Strange, happy, laughing nomad of the frozen North, living far away from the toil and strife and travail of civilization. (MacMillan 1918b:126)

MacMillan had considered geographic exploration a priority while he was in the North and turned to ethnography only when exploration was not possible. Despite the fact that he enjoyed ethnography, he adopted the explorer identity and cast the Polar Eskimos as part of the expedition support system. While he compiled an impressive list of 5902 native terms (DBM No.60); secured 5000 fully documented negatives of the people, animals, flora, and geography of the region and 12,000 feet of complementary motion picture footage; took a census in 1913 and then again in 1914; studied kinship relations; and conducted detailed studies of Polar Eskimo body measurements, he produced few ethnographic studies utilizing this information.

In his publications, MacMillan explained the progression of a Polar Eskimo seasonal round,

and outlined various hunting and domestic practices. Beyond observations concerning the purity and degeneration of the race, MacMillan reached few conclusions concerning the Polar Eskimos.

Ekblaw, the scholar, responded differently. In a work describing his major scientific trip, he acknowledged the help provided by the Polar Eskimos who accompanied him on his journey. He wrote about Esayoo, a "...sage old hunter upon whose judgement and loyalty I felt I could rely..." and Ittukusuk, "...whose courage and ability had been thoroughly tested..." (1918:335). Ekblaw concluded his report with a credit to both men, stating:

To old Esayoo I am glad to give the lion's share of the credit. Throughout the trip he had been cheerful, helpful, interested; his good sense and judgement had kept us out of trouble.... He is a thorough gentleman, a boon companion on the trail. To E-took-a-shoo [Ittukusuk] I wish to give due credit, too. His unfailing good humor, his rare hunting ability, and his excellent driving, all had contributed immeasurably to our success. (Ekblaw 1918:370)

Ekblaw's work differed from MacMillan's not only because he adopted a more appreciative, less condescending attitude toward the Polar Eskimos, but because this natural historian was examining the ecological relationship between the culture and its surroundings. Like MacMillan, Ekblaw considered the Polar Eskimos to be a distinct race and viewed admixtures of European customs with alarm (Ekblaw 1921:132-134). He believed that environment determined the nature of culture, and his economic analysis of Polar Eskimo society was devoid of value judgments (Ekblaw 1921:141). He wrote:

Theirs is a community of work, both in the family and the village, essentially efficient, without any thought of men's rights or women's rights. The producer is the consumer; the distributor and all attendant workers are unknown. Life is simple and direct. (Ekblaw 1921:143)

He, like MacMillan, often focused on some of the Polar Eskimos' most admirable qualities. But he also noted the resource distribution rationale for their dispersal throughout the

region, discussed their adoption of and adaptation to Canadian Inuit technologies, and examined the ecological rationale for their seasonal round (Ekblaw 1927:156-160). In short, Ekblaw took the time to view the Polar Eskimos in the context in which they lived, and his comments about them did not change his identity.

CONCLUSIONS

During its formulation, the Crocker Land Expedition had all the trappings of the grand western exploration expeditions that had taken place during the previous century. However, MacMillan, eager to join the ranks of Kane, Greely, and Peary, was robbed of that opportunity when Crocker Land proved to be a mirage. In addition, the man who planned to lead Polar Eskimos to new lands ended up being dependent on them, at first for food, shelter, and transportation, then for friendship. During his four years among the Polar Eskimos, MacMillan's attitude toward and relationship with his hosts changed subtly but significantly.

Upon his return to the United States, MacMillan adopted the persona of a great explorer, excluding from much of the public narrative of his work any discussions of errors he made due to inexperience, or revelations of his heavy reliance on native knowledge and expertise. In the process, he failed to acknowledge that he had learned much about the Polar Eskimos that ran counter to stereotypes of this culture. In order to present himself as a successful explorer he had to reduce the Polar Eskimos to an inferior role, resulting in his characterization of them as primitive cave men rather than versatile, seasoned explorers themselves. He embellished the stereotypes when he had the knowledge to challenge them.

At the same time, MacMillan abruptly re-entered a world involved in war. In some of his publications he presented a simplified picture of Polar Eskimo life, emphasized the positive and noble aspects of their culture, and in seeming contradiction to his first characterization, elevated them above civilized people. In doing so, he asserted the basic goodness of humanity and offered his war-weary readers hope.

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