

des deux Solitudes. Espérons que Paule Daveluy et Maryse Côté seront toujours aussi bien servies par leurs traducteurs.

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ARCTIC IMAGES

Another way of being, Pamela Harris. Impressions, 1976. 58 pp., paper. No. ISBN; *Building an igloo*, Ulli Steltzer. Douglas and McIntyre, 1981. 32 pp. \$10.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88894-325-3; *Children of the north*, Fred Bruemmer. Optimum, 1979. 160 pp. \$25.00 cloth. ISBN 0-88890-095-3; *The Inuit: life as it was*, Richard Harrington. Hurtig, 1981. 144 pp. \$14.95 paper. ISBN 0-88830-209-6.

"You know," a publishing friend commented recently, "it's in to be Inuit." She was referring to the large numbers of books dealing with Canada's northernmost Native peoples. And certainly, each year brings its new batch of books on the Inuit. For those of us charged with the responsibility of selecting, analyzing, evaluating, and teaching books for children, there are problems. Most of us just aren't that familiar with the north. Not only have we not been there, but the traditional life-styles of the Inuit and the problems they face today are completely foreign to us. How are we to approach the books which annually come into our hands?

The first thing we must do is accept the difference between our life-styles and those of the Inuit, both traditional and contemporary. We can't just make the facile assumption that we're all the same under the skin, because we aren't. We have to realize that without an understanding of the differences we can never evaluate the books that present Inuit life and culture. This is certainly a difficult task; however, it can be made easier by a careful study of the four books under consideration here. Each is by a distinguished photographer who has spent considerable time in the Arctic, and each is an attempt to understand and communicate the uniqueness of the Inuit culture. Finally, each treats the people with great respect, recognizing the uniqueness and regretting the deleterious effect of southern ways on the culture.

Probably the most useful of the four books, for both teachers and students, is *Children of the north*. By the author of several other books about the Arctic, it considers children from Siberia to Lapland. Six informal but extremely informative essays complement dozens of photographs, several of them in full color. Bruemmer considers the gentle upbringing of Inuit children, the independence of the Inuit, the role of hunting — including a moving account of a boy's first

hunt, and the deep sense of joy possessed by the people. The book's tone is respectful, but, as two chapter titles reveal, elegiac. "A vanishing way of life" and "There is no turning back" are headings which reflect the author's belief that the pictures reflect a culture which is now past. As he remarks in his conclusion, "They came from a timeless society. Now, like whites, they are slaves of time."

Bruemmer's text will be valuable for adults and high school students; his photographs will be enjoyed by readers of all ages and will be particularly valuable for giving younger children a sense of the landscape in which these lives are lived. In the color plates, one finds the delicate but varied colors of the Arctic, the effects of the sun during the various seasons. Human beings are present in all of the photographs, but in a great many of them they are placed against the vast land. In looking at these one becomes aware of the great importance of the landscape and of the courage and adaptability of those who live in harmony with it. And yet the children who play there, wearing expressions at once happy and shy, do not seem intimidated. From their earliest days, they learn to live with, rather than in conflict with their environment.

Like Bruemmer, Richard Harrington, author of *The Inuit: life as it was*, has spent a great deal of time in Canada's north, and also like Bruemmer he has an elegiac attitude: this is life as it *was* rather than *is*. Harrington's book is essentially a group of photographic essays to which the brief text serves as a gloss. He, too, stresses the joy of the people and their harmony with the environment, although he also emphasizes their stoicism and the grave danger of the environment. In fact, one of his photographic essays depicts his trip to a village in which the people are starving and diseased, a result of a poor caribou run. Not surprisingly, his pictures, all half-tones, give greater emphasis to the landscape; the figures in it seem smaller and more vulnerable. His final photograph depicts an old man, silhouetted against a grey sky, looking out on the waters. The text tells us that he is lamenting the fact that the young no longer hunt seals; the old ways are gone.

Pamela Harris' *Another way of being* focuses on a world in transition. During her four months' stay at Spence Bay in the North West Territories, the author was impressed by "a pattern that combines the traditional and the new." Her photographs, more formal than those in the earlier two books, show the presence of the white man's world in nearly every aspect of Inuit life: oil tanks, baseball hats, pictures of Elvis Presley, tractors, the divided loyalties of a young man who had attended school in the south. However, she believes that the old ways persist: "This is still a foreign land, and below the surface of consumer culture and southern-style living, these are people who are different inside their heads." The most moving photographs of the book are those which depict an excursion back to the old ways during a fishing trip to a camp at the mouth of the Netsilik River. There the evidences of civilization are fewer, the children learn syllabics, and the author and her hosts view with awe the Thunder Houses,

“ancient rock constructions charged with magic.” In the end, however, civilization triumphs, as the author, perhaps unconscious of the symbolic implications, teaches her hosts the art of photographic processing.

Building an igloo, by Ulli Stelzer, is a photographic essay which simply and clearly depicts the Inuit art which perhaps best symbolizes the people's perfect adaptation to the environment. Living for three weeks in -40 degrees celsius weather on Ellesmere Island, Stelzer accompanied her hosts on a hunting expedition and watched the igloo building operations, filled with admiration at their great skill, a skill which is evident in the clear and well organized pictures. But even this ancient art has been influenced by the forces of civilization. Although in her introduction she notes that “the only tool needed was a knife of bone, antler or walrus tusk,” the pictures reveal that the builder has availed himself of a carpenter's saw to cut and trim the blocks of snow! While the subject of the book is the building an igloo, one would also have liked to have seen some pictures of life inside the complete dwelling, pictures of the incredibly utilitarian quality of the snowhouse.

Each of the books considered here is an invaluable tool for helping children and adults come closer to understanding that wonderful and wonderfully different way of life north of the Arctic Circle. From the words, and more important, from the photographs comes a sense of a beautiful but harsh environment and a courageous, ingenious, and joyous people. If the books do lack anything, it is a portrayal of the complex, rich, and sometimes terrifying spiritual dimensions of this life, dimensions which informed everything the Inuit did or thought. But perhaps this life, intangible as it is, cannot be captured, not only because photographs cannot depict the spirit, but also because the spirit world of the Inuit is uniquely their own, something the white man can never fully understand even if the Inuit should want him to.

Jon C. Stott, Professor of English at the University of Alberta, has recently given a series of workshops in Western Canada dealing with Native and Inuit peoples in Children's Literature. He is now completing a book length study, Native realities and narrative structures in children's fiction.

PROMISES TO KEEP

The shaman's evil eye, Lyn Harrington. Illus. Dyane Harpe. Highway Book Shop, 1979. 98 pp. \$9.95 cloth, \$4.95 paper. ISBN 0-88954-209-0; 0-88954-207-4.

Red paddles, Isabel M. Reekie. Illus. Dennis Hutchins. Mitchell Press, 1968. 99 pp. \$1.95 paper. No ISBN. ***Eagle feathers in the dust***, W.P. Stewart. Butterfly Books, 1979. 167 pp. \$12.95 cloth. No ISBN.

The shaman's evil eye, *Red paddles*, and *Eagle feathers in the dust* all offer