

USE WITH CARE

Arctic memories. Normee Ekoomiak. NC Press, 1988. 32 pp., \$14.95 cloth. ISBN 1-55021-005-X.

While Mr. Ekoomiak's *Arctic memories* has great value as one artist's view of life as an Inuit, it is neither a children's book nor a picture book.

Normee Ekoomiak was born in 1948 and grew up in the Inuit settlement of Fort George on James Bay. It was his grandfather who taught him the technique of felt applique embroidered wool which now serves as his main medium. Normee studied at the New School of Art in Toronto and has exhibited in Toronto, London, Ottawa, and at the Museum of the American Indian in New York.

Arctic memories is available in English/Inuktitut, Inuktitut only, French, and German. The book consists of 17 colour plates. The bilingual edition adds an extra element of interest in its juxtaposition of two different writing forms representing two peoples who share one land.

The reproductions are accompanied by explanatory text written with the simplicity of a child. The book is a collection of the artist's work and not, in fact, a story. Lucy Bitzer, then children's art director at Four Winds Press, defines picture books as ". . . combinations of text and illustration in which both elements supplement each other to unfold the story. Neither element takes precedence and the two combine to communicate the fullest meaning of a story." (*Top of the News*. v 38, Spring 1982, 226.) *Arctic memories* is instead a beautifully produced record of some of the artist's work. The common elements that bring the 17 works together are the themes of childhood and the vanishing traditions of the Inuit peoples. The format of the book is similar to childrens' picture books but the content is not only not a story, it also has controversial elements.

The press release states that the intended audience is age 9 and up. However, in Normee's own story he tells the reader that he drinks a lot but that it is good for him (28). Normee's recital of the prejudice that he has suffered is told with such childlike candour that it adds a sense of poignancy for the adult reader but should be used cautiously with children.

The reproduced paintings and wall hangings are vivid representations of a superb Inuit craftsman. *Arctic memories* is a gem to be treasured by art lovers and those interested in Inuit life but the book should not be used by children without some additional discussion by an adult.

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