

The "Heathen Eskimos" of northern Labrador:  
Inuit sovereignty in the Torngats.

A report on the 1989 archaeological fieldwork  
at Eskimo Butte (IkDb-2).

by

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To write of the Eskimos as they were in bygone days would be a fascinating thing, but it would mean building upon a slender foundation. No, the past of the Eskimo people must always remain something of a mystery.

-S.K. Hutton, 1912

### Introduction

With the successful establishment of the Moravian Mission at Nain in 1771 the Moravian and Inuit identities became inextricably linked. At least that is the way the kablunait would have it. Irregardless of the fact that the Thule Inuit ancestors had preceded the Moravians by at least three hundred years, Eurocentric perceptions quickly reduced the Inuit to helpless wards of the wilderness, dependent on Moravian management and benevolence:

"By their [the Moravian's] means the Eskimos have been preserved from extinction, have been civilized, educated, and brought to the knowledge of their Creator and Saviour."  
(Gosling 1910:316)

The Inuit probably told a different story.

The Moravians at Nain were not long realizing that the varied resources on which the Inuit depended necessitated a high degree of mobility. Not only did a wandering, rootless existence threaten the pastoral idyll that the Moravian's envisioned for their "flock", it was readily apparent that once removed from the missionary presence the Inuit would revert to their "traditional", i.e. "heathen" ways. The Moravians sought to control these tendencies and practices by aggressively expanding their mission. Pushing out from their center at Nain, the mission at Okak was founded in 1775, followed in 1781 by the mission at Hopedale. The expanded Moravian presence had several objectives, 1) it sought to extend the missionary influence to areas which the Inuit had recourse to move to in response to social and ecological factors; 2) it sought to counter the necessity for Inuit to travel down the Labrador

coast to intercept European traders and fishermen; and 3) it provided a buffer for the "civilized" or "Christian Inuit" from their heathen, barbarous relatives in the north. This last reason figured significantly in the 19th century expansion of the Moravian Mission in Labrador.

By 1824 Nain and Hopedale were Christian communities, successfully isolated from neighboring heathen influences. Part of the Moravian strategy of control over their Inuit congregation was to encourage the Inuit to maintain a relative degree of sedentism, to keep them apart from the disruptive influences of their northern relatives. The Moravians attempted to counter these perceived threats to their ordered world view by encouraging changes in Inuit subsistence activities. The Moravians introduced the use <sup>of</sup> nets for catching seals around 1806. Strung across narrow inner island passages, large numbers of migrating Harp seals could be captured. The fall seal harvest assured a winter food supply for both the Inuit and their dogs and the excess blubber, rendered down into oil, became a principal component of the Moravian trading economy. The Moravians also encouraged the Inuit to adopt a summer cod fishery. Cod could be dried and stored for winter consumption with the surplus traded to the Mission.

With the growth of the Mission in the early 19th century the Moravians at Okak were constantly being undermined by the visits of northern Inuit traveling south to acquire materials at the Moravian posts. In order to assure some tranquillity to Okak a mission further north, at Hebron, was established in 1830.

In 1861 the Moravian Brother Reichel estimated the Inuit population along the entire Labrador coast at 1500, of which 1163 were under the influence of the Moravian Brethren (Gosling 1910:303). The approximately 350 unaccounted persons mostly comprised the small scattered family groups who lived and hunted in the Torngat Mountain region of northern Labrador between

Saglek and Cape Chidley. These were the Heathen Inuit who were so dreaded by the Moravians as they challenged all the basic precepts by which the missionaries constructed their life and by which their world view was affirmed.

Neoeskimo research in Labrador has focused on the earlier aspects of Inuit adaptation: the conditions surrounding the Thule invasion and colonization of Labrador in the 14th and 15th centuries (Schledermann 1976, Kaplan 1983) and the subsequent period of early contact dynamics between the Inuit and European fishermen (Bird 1945, Jordan 1978). The appearance of communal longhouses at 16th century Inuit sites have been interpreted as signaling the emergence of a group of powerful "middlemen" or "Big Men" as Inuit entrepreneurs sought to consolidate social and political power by managing the flow of European manufactured products and raw materials (Jordan and Kaplan 1980). Inuit territorial expansion into the Strait of Belle Isle resulted in armed confrontations between the Inuit and the Europeans and attested to the aggressiveness with which the Inuit sought access to European materials (Martijn 1980).

The research initiated with this project seeks to continue the study of the social relationships between the Inuit and Europeans by extending the discussion into the 19th century. Specifically it recognizes that the Inuit continued to advance their own agenda. The Moravian literature, full of the conflict between Heathen and Christian Inuit, clearly attests to the presence of continued friction and resistance to the Moravians. It is the nature of "resistance", the active choices made by 19th century Inuit families, that this research seeks to address. The Moravian side of the story is preserved in Mission documents and records but the Inuit side, if it is to be told, must be derived --at least in part-- from archaeology.

The Heathen Eskimos ("Okpingetut Inuit")

The winter visits of the "Heathen Eskimos" to the mission stations is a reoccurring lament in the pages of the Periodical Accounts throughout the 19th century. Ostensibly these visits were to renew kin relations and acquire European manufactured products, but they also provided the northern Inuit groups with an opportunity to observe the social and economic consequences of an intimate association with the Moravians.

While the Moravian's dreaded the disruptive influences of the northern visitors on their normally complacent congregation they also saw in it a challenge to the furtherance of their mission in Labrador:

I have taken much interest in the Northlanders who occasionally visit this settlement [Hebron]. Among them are often men with long hair and beards, while others wear amulets, and the women usually carry the infant-children naked in their hoods. As they refuse to leave their native district, the only way by which they can be benefited, would be, the establishing of some new Mission stations among them. [Private correspondence from A. Ribbach at Hebron, Periodical Accounts 23:86; 1858]

One man said, that they knew the same things of their Torngak, which we told about our Jesus, as the former had recalled to life not a few angekoks who were quite dead, etc. ... Upon this, the man cut the conversation short, by saying, laughingly, that they had heard enough of such matters, and would like to see some of our European articles. [Private correspondence from F. Erdman at Hebron, Periodical Accounts 23:300; 1858].

As soon as they [Northlanders from the Ungava and Kangiva districts] had procured the articles they wanted, they hurried back, some of them declaring that the Torngak was angry with them for listening to what was told them of Jesus. "We want presents", said some of them; "of Jesus we do not want to hear." [Extracts from private correspondence from Hebron, Periodical Accounts 24:471, 1861]

One of the last heathen "strongholds" was the region around Eclipse Channel and North Aulatsivik Island in the Torngat Mountain region of northern Labrador. Historical records describing the Inuit of this region are rare for the early part of the 19th century.

The first Europeans to visit the area and provide a description of

it were a pair of Moravian missionaries in 1811 who, with the help of their Inuit guides, journeyed along the north Labrador coast and around Cape Chidley to Ungava Bay. The Moravians met several Inuit families (50 people in seven tents) fishing for char at the mouth of the rivers and creeks in Nachvak Fiord and at Komatorvik. They sailed past Aulatsivik without stopping (except briefly, inadvertently, when they struck a rock) to rendezvous with some Inuit families from Saglek north of Kikkavik.

In the summer of 1860 the United States Government sent a small scientific party to northern Labrador to conduct observations during a solar eclipse. Like Kohlmeister and Knoch the Eclipse Expedition did not meet any Inuit during their stay at North Aulatsivik, however, in the course of their explorations in the region expedition members did discover the remains of a recently abandoned Inuit winter camp. A description of the Inuit house survives in the journal of Oscar Lieber (Lieber n.d.), the expedition's geologist. It is Lieber's account that stimulated the research objectives of the 1989 field season.

Oscar Lieber and the the U.S. Eclipse Expedition to Northern Labrador, 1860

The U.S. Eclipse Expedition to Northern Labrador was comprised of the leading American astronomers and physicist of the day. The expedition was funded by an act of Congress and a steamship, the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey vessel Bibb was made available to transport the scientists to northern Labrador.

Among the illustrious personages aboard the Bibb was a young man from Columbia, South Carolina, Oscar M. Lieber (1833-1863), former State Geologist for South Carolina and a remarkably gifted natural historian. Lieber had no specialized astronomical experience to contribute to the

expedition, but he was selected both for his willingness to assist the other members as needed, for his mapping and cartography skills, and for the opportunity to expand the science agenda of the expedition with geological and natural historical observations and collections. Lieber kept a detailed journal of his trip to Labrador, a journal which upon his return to South Carolina he was editing for publication. Unfortunately the American Civil War intervened. Lieber, an ardent believer in the South's cause enlisted in the Confederate Army. He died in 1863 from wounds sustained in battle.

Lieber was one of the pioneer economic geologists of his day, the prospects of conducting research in such a remote and scientifically unexplored region as northern Labrador was a wonderful opportunity. In his journal he adopts an amusing glib style in giving his reasons for participating in the expedition:

from the desire to pass the summer in a cooler region than South Carolina and a wish to see a country so rarely visited and little known as Labrador, as well as to learn something from actual observation of the greasy inhabitants of the far North, with whose habits Arctic explorers have recently made us acquainted. I had two other objects in view which men and smokers will appreciate. I wished to let my beard grow and obtain a fair start beyond the scrutinizing gaze of civilization and was equally anxious to colour a meershaum pipe in a region, where the temptation offered by seegars would not be likely to retard the operation.

Lieber's journal is a wonderful narrative of the expedition, besides chronicling his experiences it provides a colorful glimpse of some aspects of Inuit life in Labrador beyond that derived from Moravian sources. The expedition encountered Inuit near Battle Harbor and outside of Nain, but it is his description of the Inuit winter house on Eclipse Channel that is of interest here.

Delayed by bad weather the expedition reached North Aulatsivik Island, some seventy kilometers south of Cape Chidley, on July 14th and immediately

set about building an observatory and setting up the tidal gauges and base lines needed for eclipse related measurements. In the fashion of 19th century explorers the American scientists promptly renamed all the area's significant landmarks after patrons and friends; the large fiord-like bay south of their anchorage is today called Eclipse Channel.

July 18th, the day of the eclipse, dawned gray and overcast but cleared partially so that most of the desired observations were obtained. With the main goal of the expedition accomplished several days were given over to relaxing, dissembling the equipment, and exploring in the immediate vicinity. **[Fig.1: Photograph of Oscar Lieber and other expedition members lounging in camp, North Aulatsivik Island 1860.]**

The North Aulatsivik-Eclipse Channel region has some of the most imposing landscapes in northern Labrador. The young man from South Carolina was filled with a sense of wonder:

...The scenery of northern Labrador is certainly sublime, notwithstanding its utter desolation, for in the landscape it seems rather the angry desolation of destruction than the feeble one of barren incompetence, whatever a more scrutinizing and less artistic inspection must make of it.

**[Fig.2: Oscar Lieber's drawing of Eclipse Harbor; Fig.3: Photograph of same locality in 1989.]**

On July 20th a small party set off in the ships gig to explore the head of Eclipse Harbor and the broad channel which had been spied out as lying beyond.

...after unsuccessfully shooting at some wild swans(?) which looked like gigantic loons we took to the gig again and sailed westward to the mouth of a bold snow creek which dashed rapidly into the salt water inlet.

Here we landed. The first thing we saw on the beach was what appeared to be a dead young seal. Kicking it over, however, we saw that it was something sewed up. One of the sailors split it open with his sheath knife, when its contents were discovered to be an Esquimaux sealskin shirt and a well worn very short pair of trousers of the same material. Not far off was seen one of the stone huts they build for killing seal and, while we were yet speculating on



the fate of the owner of the bundle which was evidently washed up, we came upon an Esquimaux hut, the first we have seen. It was scarcely visible except as a very short distance. Built up against the low hill it seemed to form a part of it and a little bare earth and rock and a square black hole was all that betrayed its existence. The hut was deserted and thus admitted of our free inspection. The entrance was about 3 feet at the outside and 26 inches on the inside, so that we had to stoop and crawl in. 20 feet wide 16 ft. from inner entrance to back. 9 feet deep in the middle. Surrounding bench about 18 inches high. Over the centre of the regular floor in other words of the whole structure were two open square skylights along side of one another. The roof was fir poles the crevices stuffed with moss and grass and all covered with moss turf and earth. The benches and floor were of stone. Bones were sticking in every hole and cranny representing all the animals of this region, from the walrus and polar bear, to the wolf, fox and wolverine. Moose, deer remains, or those of rein deer were also abundant. Besides these we found cast off mokasins, half putrid skins of deer, bear, seal and wolf (white), an instrument apparently for music constructed similarly to a banjo and shaped like a pair of bellows, some walrus tusk spearheads, an iron ditto, a tin can, all and everything blackened and reeking with the rancid seal oil, covered with soot and filth, altogether the nastiest, dirtiest most greasy concern imaginable. Dry dirt is nothing to look at -wet dirt can be viewed without absolutely turning one's stomach but this greasy dirt is fearful. It is incredible that human beings can subsist in such terrible filth. No words can describe it. A hog-pen would be a parlour compared with it — greasy, smeary, sooty, rancid, putrid as it was. A few things we selected to take on board and then hastened to enjoy the fresh air again. Very large excrements by some considered as of bear, by me though of large dogs (or wolves) lay scattered in profusion.

[Fig.4: Oscar Lieber's map of Eclipse Channel.

Fig.5: Oscar Lieber's map of the Eskimo House.]

The location of the Inuit house appears on the sketch map in Lieber's journal and on a report Lieber wrote of the expedition that appeared in Petermann's, a distinguished European geographical journal (Lieber 1861). The ruins of the house Lieber visited in 1860 were rediscovered one hundred and seventeen years later when the site area was surveyed by members of the Torngat Archaeological Project. The site was given the name of Goose Run, after the small flock of moulting Canadian Geese that held title to the grassy hillside and river. The site (IkDb-2) included the remains of six

sod houses grouped around a shallow ravine overlooking the mouth of a small river. Several large stone cairns were found along the shore just below the houses. The results of the T.A.P. survey are contained in Susan Kaplan's dissertation (1983: 782-788). On the basis of test pits placed in four of the six houses it was determined that the structures were the remains of 19th century Inuit houses.

It was not until 1985 when I had the opportunity to read Lieber's journal (at the University of South Carolina's Caroliniana Library in Columbia) and determine the connection between the site that Lieber visited and the sod house remains discovered in 1977. The site seemed to be an excellent candidate for initiating an ethnohistorical-archaeological investigation of 19th century Labrador Inuit culture. Up until the mid-century the Inuit living around North Aulatsivik Island were among the most isolated groups in northern Quebec and Labrador. Given Lieber's detailed description of the house and his accompanying plan it seemed a particular appropriate structure to excavate in order to derive information from a Heathen Inuit camp that was known to be occupied in 1860. It was anticipated that fieldwork at Eskimo Hutte --acknowledging the precedent and preference for the earlier site nomenclature— would provide an excellent opportunity to compile data which could be compared with coeval sites that maintained a closer affiliation with the Moravians missionaries.

#### 1989 Fieldwork at Eclipse Channel

Transportation to Eclipse Channel was on board the newly refurbished Pitsiulak in the course of the Smithsonian Institution's archaeological and geological research in northern Labrador. We arrived at Eclipse Channel long after sundown on the 30th of July. The stark alpine peaks surrounding the fiord were outlined against the last of the northlight. We hadn't been

at our anchorage across from Eskimo Hutte fifteen minutes before we had to discourage a polar bear from climbing on board.

Consequently it was a subdued and cautious field-party that was put ashore early the next morning and watched the Pitsiulak put off for Burwell. With the help of Phil Woodly, an archaeology student from McMaster's University, and Charlie Terriak from Nain, camp was quickly set up in a shallow ravine immediately to the east of Esquimaux Hutte. The site is situated near the mouth of a brawling shallow river --Lieber's "Snow Creek"-- and overlooks a small delta, the broad reaches of Eclipse Channel, and the high rocky hills of the Miller Peninsula and North Aulatsivik Island. As many as 15 Harbour seals (Phoca vitulina) could be seen at one time swimming about or climbed up on top of the many boulders that covered the surface of the delta.

Fieldwork was initiated at Eskimo Hutte as it seemed to offer an excellent opportunity to examine a mid-19th century Labrador Inuit site remote from Moravian influence. We hoped to be able to specifically identify the structure that Lieber visited and to determine the temporal relationship between it and the other structures at the site. Lacking the time to completely excavate a structure we hoped to be able to assess the conditions at the site and sample enough of the structures to determine the nature of the household deposits and the extent and preservation of associated middens.

Lieber's account mentions only a single structure at Eskimo Hutte, either he did not notice the already ruined remains of earlier houses or the additional structures were built after 1860. Originally we hoped to identify the 1860 structure by comparing Lieber's drawing with our own measurements and by limited excavations in the entranceway passages of the likely structures. Not surprisingly none of the extent structures at Eskimo

Hutte exactly coincided with Lieber's plan drawing, soil slumpage and collapsed walls having obscured the original dimensions. Furthermore, as our excavations revealed, many of the houses had more than one occupation with subsequent renovations likely altering the original dimensions.

[Fig.6: Site plan of Eskimo Hutte-1 with location of excavation units.]

#### Excavation Units:

Comparisons between the ruined house remains and Lieber's drawing limited the possibilities of identifying the structure occupied in 1860 to one of three houses.

House-1, is a small rectangular structure built into hillside, it has a short entranceway passage and a rear sleeping platform. Walrus bones and iron sled runners were lying tangled in the grass on the surface in the house interior. Although House 1 is somewhat smaller than the structure described by Lieber it was similar enough to warrant a test excavation. A 2.5 x 1.5 meter excavation unit was placed in the entranceway tunnel immediately in front of the collapsed entranceway lintel construction. The sterile overburden of fallen wall and roof sods was removed to expose a flat stone slab floor lining the entranceway tunnel. A shallow midden composed of animal bone, fragments of wood (chips, chunks and cut pieces), and discarded artifacts was recovered from just above the floor.

Cultural materials included ceramic sherds, glass and iron fragments, nails, bullets and center-fire cartridge cases, scraps of cloth, tin cans, tin cups, and beads. A celluloid (or vulcanite) mouthpiece for a pipe was perhaps the most temporally diagnostic piece recovered as they were not invented until 1878 (Gradwohl and Osborn 1984: 154-155; Walker 1983). The House 1 assemblage is clearly later than 1860, a best guess for the date of the assemblage is between 1880-1890.

House-1 Midden. An 80cm square excavation unit was placed six meters

from the end of the short entranceway tunnel near the base of the knoll on which the house was situated. Beneath a shallow surface sod cover was a 6 cm thick pavement of well preserved animal bones intermixed with a few artifacts.

House 2 is a large rectangular structure with a six meter long entranceway tunnel. Stone boulders are set at the mouth of the entranceway tunnel which opens out directly on to the back wall of House-1. A lid to a large copper kettle which had been turned into a seal oil lamp was found on the surface in the interior of the house. **[Fig.8: Charlie Terriak holding the lid from a copper kettle used as a seal oil lamp.]** An excavation unit was placed just inside the mouth of the tunnel extending into the tunnel for two meters. Excavation did not extend deeper than the top of the carefully prepared paved stone floor. There may be deeper deposits but we did not desire to disturb the existing architecture with our test unit. Bone and wood preservation was excellent.

Artifacts recovered included scraps of iron, porcelain and earthenware ceramics, fragments of bottle glass, center-fire rifle cartridges and gun parts, wooden toggles, nails, kakkivak parts, beads, harmonica and toy trumpet parts, spoons, scissors, and clothing items like buckles and buttons. This assemblage also appeared to post date the period of the Eclipse Expedition and is likely coterminous with House 1 or slightly earlier.

As House-1 and House-2 were clearly post-1880 we turned our attention to House 3. House-3, a small square structure with 4.5 meter long walls, a rear raised sleeping platform and a seven meter long entranceway tunnel. Just inside the house was a lamp stand, a built up platform of sand and flat slabs encrusted with carbonized blubber.

Three 1x1 meter test units at the mouth of the entranceway tunnel

produced hand wrought iron spikes, kaolin pipe stem fragments, fragments of yellow ware and annular ware ceramics, an assemblage that was clearly earlier than the material recovered in House 1 and House 2.

Believing House-3 to be the structure visited by the members of the U.S. Eclipse Expedition we concentrated our attentions on it. Excavations were conducted in the midden in front of the house, in the entranceway tunnel, and in the sunken area between the entranceway and the sleeping platforms.

Wall profiles of the entranceway tunnel show that the house was reoccupied on at least two occasions. The earliest materials, those possibly associated with an 1860's occupation were recovered from the lower levels of the midden in front of the house. The lower level assemblage from House 3 had significantly fewer artifacts of European manufacture from both the upper level in House 3 and from the excavation units in House 1 and House 2 which further strengthens the 1860 attribution in that the material appears to reflect a period when the trade and economic interaction offered by the Moravians and the Hudson's Bay Company was not well developed.

The lower level in House 3 was not reached in the interior of the house, nor in the entranceway tunnel near the interior, as to do so would have necessitated removing the cut wooden planks and stone slabs of the later (1880s) occupation.

Houses 4, 5 and 6 each had architectural features that precluded their consideration as the structure Lieber visited. Based on our analysis of the small artifact samples recovered in our excavation units House 3 is the most likely candidate for the structure that was occupied in 1860.

Houses 7 and 8 on the north side of the river.

The limited duration of our stay at Eclipse Channel afforded few opportunities to conduct additional surveys in the region. We did however discover two new semisubterranean sod houses on the north side of the river

which were quite interesting. Unlike the cluster of six houses at the river's mouth these structures were situated some distance upstream out of sight of salt water. House-7 was a kilometer up from the river's mouth, and House-8 was a kilometer and a half. The structures were similar in that they both had long entranceway tunnels facing south towards the river and a rectangular interior with clearly delineated rear and side sleeping platforms, lamp stands and box alcoves all of which were very neatly defined by vertically set rock slabs.

House-7 was the less clearly defined of the two structures. The collapse of the exterior sod walls made the interior dimensions of the structure difficult to determine but it appears to have been an oval structure with an internal diameter of about three meters. A carefully constructed stone-lined box, at the rear of the recessed central area opposite the entranceway, would have been a safe "locker" for food and/or equipment. Both the stone box and the recessed entranceway had carefully prepared floors of flat stone slabs. Test pits in the midden area below the house did not locate any faunal remains. Excavations conducted within the house found it to be very clean. The house had obviously not been abandoned abruptly. Material recovered included: the side-plate of a musket, several iron sled runners, a heart-shaped tin tobacco tag, a few pieces of iron scrap, nails, a percussion cap and a number of turquoise and white "seed" beads.

Percussion caps were readily available after 1825 (Johnson and Haven 1943:34) and were in use in Labrador well into the middle of the 20th century. The absence of center-fire rifle cartridges, which became available after about 1870 —and which were plentiful and of wide variety in the House 1-3 excavation units— supports an early attribution for House-7.

House-8. Unquestionably the most impressive structure at Eskimo Hutte

House-8 is a large rectangular structure seven meters wide with sides five meters long. The house is entered through a four meter long entranceway passage after crawling beneath a large flat lintel stone. The interior of the house has a carefully prepared floor of flat stone slabs, sleeping platforms along both side walls and the rear wall, a stone lined meat locker beside one platform and a lamp stand near the very middle of the house. [Fig.9: photograph of House-8]. The house walls are constructed of as many as six courses of stones which rise up to 90 cms above the sleeping platform. A one meter square excavation unit placed immediately in front of the lamp stand recovered a fragment of a stem from a kaolin pipe, a wrought iron nail and a small fragment of a banded ironstone/whiteware ceramic vessel.

A test pit at the mouth of the entranceway tunnel and in the area between the house and the river failed to locate any faunal materials or midden deposits.

The small size of the collection derived from the excavation units placed in House-7 and House-8 make chronological interpretations less than conclusive however, the musket part, the percussion cap from House-7 and the sparse ceramic materials in either house, suggest that the structures are among the earliest at Eskimo Hutte.

#### Survey on North Aulatsivik Island

With the return of the Pitsiulak on August 8th we made a brief sojourn to Eclipse Harbor on North Aulatsivik Island in an attempt to locate the cairn containing Eclipse Expedition records which had been cryptically referred to in the expedition report (Alexander 1860:249). Although we were able to locate the site of the 1860 camp from old photographs no trace of any cairn was found. We did however find a sleeping polar bear and an



interesting Middle Dorset site on a stubby peninsula north of French Bight (the shoal water passage between Eclipse Harbor and Eclipse Channel). I suspect that Inuit families returning to Aulatsivik after the departure of the Eclipse Expedition, would have investigated the sudden appearance of a stone cairn in their country and probably dismantled it for the bottle contained within.

### Conclusions

The 1989 research at Eclipse Channel is the beginning of a research initiative on 19th century Labrador Inuit culture. Archaeology promises access to insight on Labrador Inuit socioeconomics, philosophy, ideology and subsistence strategies that are not dependent on the obviously biased accounts of Hudson Bay Company fur-traders or Moravian Missionaries. The continuity between historical (and prehistorical) populations and extant peoples in the North affords an opportunity to examine the relationship between ethnography and archaeology as well as being politically sensitive in encouraging northern native peoples to participate in research with cultural relevance to them. Specifically, at Eskimo Hutte, I hoped to recover data that provided insight on the social activities and regional interaction of Labrador Inuit along the northern coast who had "resisted" the economic and ideological advances of the Europeans by maintaining their northern identity; data that could be compared with subsequent excavations at coeval Inuit houses at Moravian Missions. The prospects of being able to specifically identify an Inuit semi-subterranean sod-house that was known to be occupied during the winter of 1859-1860 promised excellent chronological control over the material recovered.

In addition to identifying the 1860 house, test excavations at the site were conducted to find out the nature and the extent of middens associated with the house structures, to work out the chronology between the different

houses and to figure out the state of preservation at the site in order to determine conservation and analytical needs should subsequent fieldwork be conducted.

Armed with a copy of Lieber's plan of the Inuit house he visited in 1860 I did not expect any difficulties in identifying it in the field. As described above, all of the houses examined had been reoccupied on at least one occasion and subsequent remodeling and soil slumpage had obscured the earliest wall outlines. Notwithstanding these difficulties it is believed that House 3 at Eskimo Hutte was the structure visited by the American scientists.

Eskimo Hutte is an important 19th century site, a second field season there would be most productive in affording the opportunity to completely excavate House 3 as well as the (apparently) earlier House 8. The later structure is quite likely one of the best preserved sod and stone walled houses in Labrador and contains a number of architectural elements that disappeared from the south and central coasts at least a century earlier.

As the analysis of the excavated materials is presently under way the following observations are subject to revision.

Faunal preservation at Eskimo Hutte was not as good as had been anticipated. The dense growth of grass that covers much of the site insulates the deeper sheltered midden deposits so that permafrost is encountered at the lower levels in the interior of House 3 and in test pits inside House 4. However, the midden that accumulated on the hill slope in front of the house entranceway tunnels is not thick enough to allow permafrost to be sustained. As a consequence fragile faunal remains, particularly bones from bird and fish species, are not preserved. Animal bone was collected from the house floors in all of the excavation units, the only substantial midden deposit that we located was that that had

accumulated in front of House 1. The faunal material is currently being analysed by Dr. Arthur Spiess. A superficial inspection indicates that seal remains are most represented with lesser amounts of walrus, caribou, and Arctic fox. Some bones have pitted surfaces and gnawed epiphyseal ends that indicate the presence of dogs at the site.

The faunal remains attest to the significance of mammalian species in the Inuit diet. It is important to take into consideration how the differential preservation of species in Inuit middens influence reconstruction of subsistence practices. Although there is not a scrap of faunal evidence to support the claim it is believed that fish, especially char, were an important aspect of the subsistence activities conducted at the site. This interpretation is based on the high incidence of prongs from fish spears, kakkivaks, which were recovered at the site, as well as the presence of several large boulder caches along the river.

Kohlmeister and Knoch provide an account of the late winter char fishery conducted by the northern Inuit:

Like the salmon, they [salmon-trout, i.e. char] remain in the rivers and fresh-water lakes during the winter, and return to the sea in the spring. The Esquimaux about Okkak and Saeglek, catch them in winter under the ice by spearing. For this purpose, they make two holes in the ice, about eight inches in diameter, and six feet asunder, in a direction from north to south. The northern hole they screen from the sun, by a bank of snow about four feet in height, raised in a semicircle round its southern edge, and form another similar bank on the north side of the southern hole, sloped in such a manner as to reflect the rays of the sun into it. The Esquimaux then lies down, with his face close to the northern aperture, beneath which the water is strongly illuminated by the sunbeams entering at the southern. In his left hand he holds a red string, with which he plays the water, to allure the fish, and his right a spear, ready to strike them as they approach. In this manner they soon take as many as they want.

(Kohlmeister and Knoch 1811:28-29)

Char were also speared in August and September when they were especially prized for their high fat content (ibid).

Nearly all of the excavation units at Eskimo Hutte contained scraps of preserved wood. Much of the wood consisted of chips and fragments of cut tree limbs (obviously the by product of chopping wood) but portions of poles, and rough hewn planks were also encountered. Most of the wood was collected for analysis by Dosia Laeyendecker at the Smithsonian Institution. It will be interesting to try and determine the source of the wood: whether it is derived from driftwood; from the nearest stand of trees in the Korok River valley —approximately 90 kms to the south-- (Loring 1979); or, especially in the case of poles and planks, acquired in trade with the Europeans. As late as 1908 Inuit hunters at Killinek would travel south to Okak to get the necessary timber for boat and sled construction (Hutton 1912:32).

Inuit seal-oil lamps were the principal means of heating the Eskimo Hutte houses. No traces of iron or tin stoves were recovered but the occasional piece of burned wood and a fragment of coal (obviously acquired in trade from the Europeans at Nachvak or Ramah) suggest alternative sources of heat were used on occasion.

Not surprisingly the amount and variety of trade materials at Eskimo Hutte increases throughout the 19th century. The earliest occupations dating between 1840 and 1860 contain comparatively small amounts of European materials: beads, kaolin pipes, a few scraps of European ceramics and hand wrought iron nails. By 1880 both the quantity and variety of European manufactured products had increased dramatically. Competing European interests vied for the Inuit trade in the later half of the 19th century. The Hudson's Bay Company fearing the loss of the lucrative Inuit trade in Ungava from an expanding Moravian presence on the north coast of Labrador established a pair of trading posts north of the Moravian Mission station at Hebron (founded in 1830). The company built a post at Saglek Fiord

around 1865 and one further north at Nachvak in 1868. The Moravians launched their assault on the last heathen stronghold in the Torngats with the establishment of a mission station at Ramah Bay in 1871. The Inuit in northern Labrador were not long in taking advantage of these opportunities to acquire manufactured products. Evidence that the Inuit living at Eskimo Hutte were adroit at taking advantage of the competition between the HBC and the Moravians is inferred from the recovery of artifacts attributable to the two sources: heart-shaped tobacco tin tags were recovered from House-1 and House-7, these are identical to ones recovered at mid-19th century Innu sites on Indian House Lake (Samson 1978) where they are undoubtedly derived from Hudson Bay Company posts; a small scrap of paper from a book recovered in House 3 has German words and lettering implying a Moravian source.

Inuit houses at the Moravian Mission sites at Zoar, Nain, Hebron and Ramah all have large amounts of imported European ceramics in their assemblages. Ceramics are conspicuously absent at Eskimo Hutte being represented by only a few very small pieces. On the other hand tin ware is very common occurring as cups and plates and in a wide variety of cut shapes. Other common materials recovered during the excavations at Eskimo Hutte include iron nails and scrap. Gun related items (rifle parts, cartridge casings, melted lead, percussion caps) after nails and metal scrap were the largest artifact class followed by items relating to tobacco smoking.

In addition to using specific tools acquired from the Europeans (saws, drills, guns, etc.) the Inuit at Eskimo Hutte adapted and modified raw materials for their own purposes (nails made into fish hooks, lead melted into bullets, tin lids turned into seal oil lamps) and continued to use local materials in traditional ways (whalebone sled

mouthpiece for inflating a sealskin float, wooden toggles).

**[Fig.10:artifacts from Eskimo Hutte.]**

The journals from the Hudson's Bay Company posts at Nachvak and the Moravian Mission archives are valuable sources for information on the Inuit from northern Labrador. Unfortunately these records provide only a part of the story, tantalizing as it is, with just a faint echo of the voices of the "Northlanders" themselves. It is possible to gather together a few loose historical insights, like those of Lieber, but these are soon exhausted and the silence only deepens with the realization of the lost. It is for archaeologists and for the descendants of the people from Aulatsivik, the great-great-grandchildren of the family who weren't at home when the kablunaut visited, to reconstruct, remember and tell the story of those days.

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Still, after fifteen years, the support, enthusiasm, camaraderie and stimulation of William Fitzhugh continues to serve as the definition of collaboration research. His willingness to facilitate our transportation to Eclipse Channel on board the R.V. Pitsiulak made the summer's fieldwork possible. The crew of the Pitsiulak, it's skipper Perry Colbourne, the first (and last!) mate Sophie Morse and crew members Carolyn Maybee and Mark Allston set new standards in the quality of life among icebergs and polar bears.

The fieldwork at Eskimo Hutte was conducted with the help of Phil Woodley, an MA candidate from McMaster University, and Charlie Terriak from Nain. They were as diligent and tireless a crew as one might hope for to share a wilderness camp.

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recognize.

Finally, there were at least two polar bears roaming about the Eclipse Channel-North Aulatsivik country during the summer of 1989. We encountered both at different times. Once we drew a line in the sand and told the bear he wasn't under any circumstance to cross over it! Thankfully, graciously, the bears in every case retired granting us the field.

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