

Relocating the Ahiarmiut from Ennadai Lake to Arviat (1950-1958)

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Introduction

The relocations of the Ahiarmiut from Ennadai Lake between 1950 and 1958 are considered as a failure that caused great distress to the native population. The testimonies of the Ahiarmiut elders we recorded in Arviat all show how these relocations were experienced as a painful and terrible deportation. Scholars such as F. Tester and P. Kulchyski (1994) and A. Marcus (1995) have examined the policies of the Canadian administration which, through various agencies notably the Department of Indian and Northern Resources (DIANR) and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), have prepared the relocations. Even if there existed considerable differences between and within these various agencies all shared common values with respect to the necessity to assume responsibility for the well being of the native people. But the perspectives of the Ahiarmiut themselves were never discussed in any detail. So far, little attention has been paid to the lasting effects of these relocations on the Ahiarmiut population. In 2003 we organised a workshop with Ahiarmiut elders on 'Survival and *Angakkuuniq*' in Arviat (Nunavut). In the course of this workshop the Ahiarmiut elders Job and Eva Muqyunnik, Luke and Mary Anautalik often reflected on the events that almost fifty years ago had disrupted their lives and still affected them. The four Ahiarmiut participants in the workshop hence asked us whether we would be prepared to organise a workshop at

Ennadai Lake on their first relocations. Such a workshop *in situ* would enable them to return to their homeland and come to terms with the events of the past. Moreover, it would provide them with an opportunity to transfer their knowledge and love of the land to their families and descendants, a process that had already started in 1985 during a first trip to Ennadai Lake (see BELSEY 1985a, b and c). We agreed to look for funding to organize such a workshop *in situ*, at Ennadai Lake but for various reasons including the health of the elders and the high costs of such an operation, the Ahiarmiut elders agreed to hold the workshop in Arviat. Thanks to a grant received from CLEY and from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), the workshop was organized there from April 31 to May 5, 2006.

The participants were all Ahiarmiut living in different communities: Eva Muqyunnik, Job Muqyunnik, Mary Anautalik, John Aulatjut, Silas Ilungiyajuk, Geena Aulatjut lived in Arviat. Andrew Alikashuak came from Whale Cove, and Mary Whitmore from Churchill. Annie Seewoe and Luke Anautalik from Arviat were invited but unfortunately unable to participate because of their physical condition. David Serkoak from Iqaluit was also invited but could not come because of obligations in Cambridge Bay¹. Frédéric Laugrand and Jarich Oosten acted as facilitators of the workshop and Atuat (Mary Thompson) from Arviat took care of the coordination and organization of the workshop as well as the interpretation. She also provided us with opportunities to interview non-Ahiarmiut elders such as James and Helen Konek.

With the assistance of Marco Michaud, student at Laval University, the facilitators had first studied the relevant documents that were available in the RCMP, Army and DIANR archives in Ottawa. Some of these documents are used in this paper but in order to avoid mistakes we have kept the original spelling of the Inuit names as they appear in the various sources². The workshop was set up in an anthropological perspective focusing on the Ennadai Lake relocation and Ahiarmiut culture and history. During a week, all sessions were audio taped and video taped. This paper presents a historical overview of the results of the archival research as well as testimonies from Ahiarmiut elders³. It points out congruent points and discrepancies between the views of the administration and those of the Ahiarmiut. It was not always easy to match up archival dates with elders recollections. The Ahiarmiut elders have vivid recollections of their experiences, but show little interest in the dates. Our attempts to date their experiences always led to intensive discussions between the elders themselves and the results were often inconclusive.

¹ See also SERKOAK n.d.

² Similarly all the sources are quoted as they appear in the original documents.

³ This text is a shorter version of a paper published in *Polar Record* in 2010. We do not discuss here the complex history of the Ahiarmiut group but references on this topic can be found in our *Polar Record* paper as well as in Csonka (1995).

The relocations

The literature on the Ahiarmiut relocations consists mainly of a few chapters in *Tammarniit* by Frank Tester and Peter Kulchyski (1994) and a few chapters in *Relocating Eden*, authored by Alan Marcus (1995) and Williamson and Foster (1974). These studies focus on two relocations: the relocation to Nueltin Lake in 1950 and the relocation to Henik Lake in 1957. The Ahiarmiut point out that there were more relocations as the Ahiarmiut were relocated to Arviat and from Arviat to Whale Cove and Rankin Inlet. In this paper we will mainly focus on the first three relocations: from Ennadai Lake to Nueltin Lake, from Ennadai Lake to Henik Lake and from Henik Lake to Arviat (Eskimo Point).

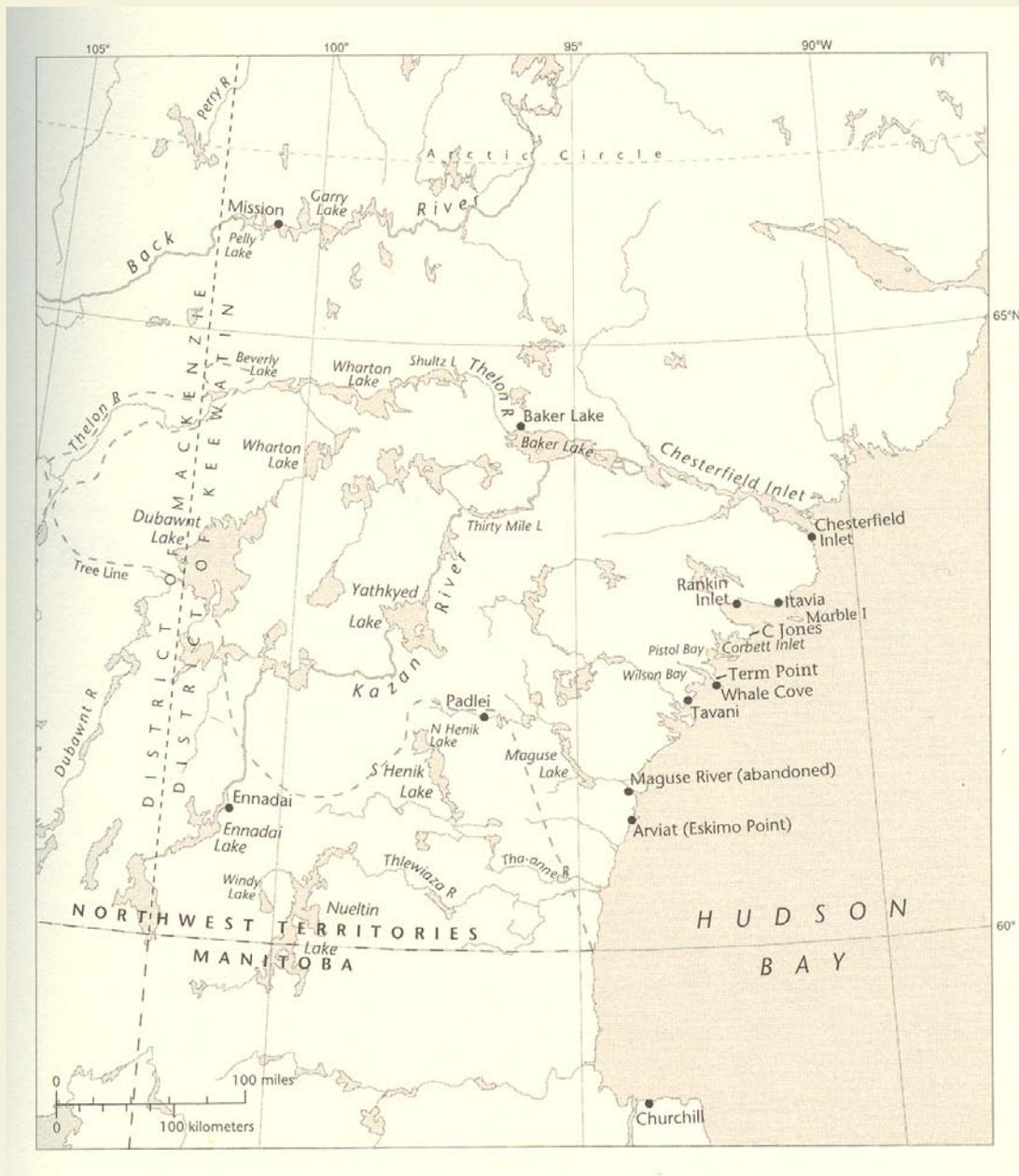


Fig. 1 Map of the general area where Ahiarmiut relocations occurred.

The Ahiarmiut have been an inland people for at least several generations and their cultural traditions show that they were perfectly adapted to the inland life and do not indicate that they may have been a coastal people. Yvon Csonka (1992) suggests that the Ahiarmiut may have been reduced from about 450 people before the 1920's to about sixty people in the 1940's. Despite the various starvations they had to face during the 19th century, Csonka (1992: 17) indicates that the Ahiarmiut population probably increased considerably until the beginning of the 20th century. Apparently, this process only ceased between 1915 and 1925, when a series of starvations affected the Caribou Inuit (see BURCH 1986: 129 and CSONKA 1992: 18-19).

These groups always had dealt with hardships. Csonka (1995) shows that Ahiarmiut like many North American Indians never interacted as harmoniously with their environment as is commonly believed. Periods of abundance alternated with periods of scarcity of game and even starvation. Csonka quotes a policeman based in Eskimo Point who stated in 1926, just after a starvation period: "Inuit did not appear to treat the starvation question seriously....to speak of starvation to them appeared to be by no means a matter of great importance" (ANC 1926, quoted by CSONKA 1992: 19). Qallunaat, white people, were often puzzled by the capacity of Inuit to endure periods of starvation. In the 19th as well as in the 20th century, Qallunaat observers always tended to perceive Inuit to be in a state of need. In the archival sources we used for this paper, such a perception is continuously expressed. The main arguments proposed in the archival sources and documents for the relocations are formulated in economic terms. Many sources assume that the hunting opportunities at Ennadai Lake were insufficient and that therefore the Ahiarmiut had to be relocated to an area that provided better opportunities. However, the relocations to Nueltin Lake and Henik Lake both proved complete failures. The Ahiarmiut themselves maintain that Ennadai Lake was an excellent hunting area and failed to understand why they were relocated. The Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources (DNANR) and the RCMP argued that the Ahiarmiut were becoming increasingly dependent on outside assistance. Various trading agencies had been present in the area, but in most cases the amount of trade seems to have been insufficient to maintain a permanent trading post. The trading post of Revillon Frères at Ennadai Lake was abandoned in the early 1930's (see MALLETT 2000) and the Hudson's Bay Company trading post at Nueltin Lake was abandoned in 1941 (TESTER & KULCHYSKI 1994: 208). Even if considerable trade with individual trappers and traders (see CSONKA 1995) continued, the administration assumed that the Inuit would soon disappear with the closing of these trading posts. This idea strengthened their conviction of the need to move the Ahiarmiut from Ennadai Lake at a time when the army began to use that place as a radio station.

In 1949 the Canadian Army Signal Corps built the radio station at Ennadai Lake (MARCUS 1995: 129). The Ahiarmiut elders describe the building of the radio station as an enjoyable time and appreciated trade with the personnel of the radio station. At the time

Inuit were increasingly using Western technology and depended on trade for guns, ammunition, tea, tobacco and other goods. Oral sources suggest that Inuit usually were able to have a good life at Ennadai Lake, but there were occasional periods of starvation and relief. Relief supplies, notably buffalo meat, were sent in 1948 and 1949. Various factors appear to have contributed to the decision to relocate the Ahiarmiut. The administration repeatedly expressed its fear that the Inuit would become dependent on relief. In the 1940's the dominant view in the administration was that Inuit would lose their capacity to survive independently if they came into close contact with white communities for too long. The decision to remove the Ahiarmiut from Ennadai Lake was therefore an unavoidable consequence of the foundation of the radio station. Obviously the Ahiarmiut themselves were unaware of these implications and not informed of them by the administration.

The Nueltin Lake relocation, 1950

The relocation to Nueltin Lake was badly prepared and executed as made clear by the director of Northern Affairs B. G. Sivertz in a memorandum to the deputy minister dated from March 9, 1959:

A seemingly fortunate solution appeared on the scene. Sigurdson and Martin, of Churchill, proposed to establish a commercial fishery under the title of Nueltin Lake Fish Products at Nueltin Lake, approximately 50 to 75 miles from Ennadai Lake. Even though there was not a concentration of Eskimos at the lake, the company advised that "The lake was capable of providing a livelihood for every Eskimo from Baker Lake southwards". It was prepared to hire Eskimos for putting up buildings, then have them participate in the fishing operation under the direction of experienced fishermen who would teach them how to fish and fillet. The operation would earn cash and food for the Ennadai Lake people. The relocation proposal was met with favour by the Department of Fisheries, by the RCMP and the Northwest Territories Administration, Department of Resources and Development. (SIVERTZ 1959)

In the early summer of 1950, 47 Eskimos were airlifted from Ennadai Lake to Nueltin Lake as arranged by the Department of Resources and Development. By Christmas they had all wandered back to their old hunting grounds at the radio station. The project had failed and for good reasons.

The company had run into financial problems, transportation difficulties and lacked facilities for storing fish while awaiting shipment to Churchill. They concluded that they could not operate economically and closed down operations before the end of the summer. Secondly the Government's plans on paper, had omitted the inclusion of an interpreter to explain to the Eskimos why they were being moved, the work that the company had expected of them, and the overall benefits to themselves in the company of the commercial fishery. This unfortunate omission was our fault and a considerable factor in the project's failure. It was reported that one Eskimo said they were being moved because they were without food and the white man was going to fish for them. Further factors were that this people had traditionally been caribou hunters and they missed the hunting to which they were accustomed. Bush was not as favourable as tundra; fish was no food substitute for caribou. (SIVERTZ 1959)

The participants in the workshop recalled that their possessions at Ennadai Lake were destroyed and that they were transported without any provision to Nueltin Lake. They were transported to an island in the lake where only trees provided some cover. They had no food and no adequate equipment. Job Muqyunnik recalls:

I am going to tell you now about the saddest time of my life. It was around May in 1949. Qallunaat came to the weather station there at Ennadai Lake. They had a large vehicle up there. This bulldozer came to our tent. The driver told us to leave our tent so we went out. He went back to his vehicle and drove over our tent, back and forth. He broke everything we had. He drove over them and destroyed everything. That was the hardest time of my life because we didn't have anything to survive with anymore. There was a yellow two-engine plane. The person who destroyed our tent told us to get on the plane. Louis Voisey was our interpreter. He couldn't do anything to help so I am not going to accuse him or anything like that. He told us to get on the plane. This man had a stick and he would do this to each one of us. Without saying anything he directed us to the plane. We couldn't speak his language. This was the first time we saw this Qallunaaq. We didn't know their boss. He was saying something. He said that we were garbage. That's all I remember. He said that everything was garbage. He took us to the island by plane. He found the biggest island in that area. We had nothing, not even a cup or a knife, nothing. No axe, nothing at all. He dropped us at this island. We spent a long time at that island. There were a whole bunch of us. There were us men, and our wives. They started to cry, knowing that they might not survive. We spent eight months walking around that island. Then we went back to Ennadai Lake on foot. (ARVIAT 2003)

Cunningham, director of Northern Affairs and National Resources at the time, reports in a memorandum dated August 31, 1954 to the Deputy Minister that equipment and instruction were inadequate:

It was difficult to know how to urge and instruct the Eskimo to do things that would alleviate the famine, for example new fishnets were sent to the Eskimo last year. These are now reported to be torn and useless. In addition, the fish are said to be deep in the lake. There would seem little doubt that materials for mending nets, instruction in the work and long lines to reach to the bottom of the lake would have enabled the Eskimos to continue to catch fish. (CUNNINGHAM 1954b)

The Ahiarmiut elders related that they were not allowed to take any of their belongings with them and that they were not provided with any means of subsistence.

Job Muqyunnik related (ARVIAT 2005):

We waited over there to have our belongings to be brought, but we had no axes, no knives what so ever. No place to sleep. We would just lie down on the ground, still waiting for the plane to bring back our belongings but they never did. So we slept on the rocks for many nights, thinking that our belongings would be brought back to us. But they never did. A few of us didn't even have mittens. And after some time some women start to cry. They would cry because they had nothing to live, nothing to survive on.

Fortunately some help and materials were provided by Indians in the area and by a trader called Bill Black. Andrew Alikashuak recalled:

Each morning we would get up and there would be nothing. The only shelter we would have was the pieces of trees put together as shelter. We would lie on the ground and sleep with no pillow or whatsoever or blanket to cover us. [...] I remember it was very dark in that place at night. I saw a person walking toward me and I thought it was Anautalik, because I called Anautalik my aqatik, but it was not Anautalik, it was the Indian. I couldn't communicate with him even though he stopped in front of me, I couldn't speak with him. Even if he spoke English or his language I couldn't understand. There was no way of communicating. So he pointed to a tent. My mother was there. I was given some kind of biscuits I thought that was a lot of food. At least I ate something.

I remember that, after we walked for about one month, my father couldn't get up anymore. So he would tell us what to do since he couldn't get around anymore. He would tell my mother and me what to do and we would follow his instructions. We would put the net out to fish, if we were lucky we might get one fish and we would take it back to my father. We would cut the fish in such small pieces that we could eat one piece everyday [...]. We survived by cutting the fish into small pieces so at least we could chew something (ARVIAT 2005).

Mary Anautalik recalled how several elders died because of the cold (Arviat 2005):

Because it was springtime, when we got there, we used trees as shelters, because we didn't have anything else. Because we didn't had a tent or any kind of shelter we started to get sick. We had a cold; we didn't have medical help so we started to get sick after two to three weeks.

We were sick, because we didn't have a tent. So one by one, we started to have a cold. Because everybody got sick that time, four of the elders died.

It hurts to remember when those four elders died. We couldn't even find a box to put them into when they died. So we buried them on the ground. We had to just leave them there. It was not our fault. We didn't have any choice but to leave them.

It was because of our parents' ability that we were able to go back to our homeland, because of the way they could survive. It was only through their help that we were able to go back to our land.

The Ahirmiut drifted back to Ennadai Lake within a few months. Eva Muqyunnik recalled (Arviat 2005):

It was in the fall. We didn't have any dogs. So we dragged everything we had. We walked; we started walking back to Ennadai Lake. It took us about three months from the time we were taken there to go back to Ennadai Lake. It must have been around Christmas time when we got back. We would not have survived, none of us would had survived, if we stayed where we were taken to. When we got back to Ennadai Lake, it took us 3 months. Once we got there, there were plenty of animals again: caribou, fish, so we had plenty to eat once we got back to our homeland.

Alikashuak related that it took his family six months to make the trip back to Ennadai:

I think it must have taken six months for my family to walk back to Ennadai Lake. Muqyunnik and Anautalik saw us coming from a distance. So they came to meet us since we were all weak from starvation. And that is all I can remember.

I forgot to mention that when we were walking back to Ennadai Lake, I was about eight years old.

My mother gave birth to a little girl. She didn't survive since my mother was already very weak from starvation. She was between my brother and my sister but she did not survive. (ARVIAT 2005)

They had suffered considerable hardships at Nueltin Lake and on the trip back. These recollections from the elders are congruent with written sources as an RCMP report noted that Gleason Ledyard, an Evangelical missionary, had advised the police that the Ahiarmiut did not like Nueltin Lake saying that it was strange to them and inadequate for hunting (see STEENHOVEN 1955, ROWLEY 1956 in MARCUS 1995: 135). The matter would have rested there, if the Government had not planned a second relocation.

The preparation of the Henik Lake relocation 1954-1956

In 1954, the Department Air Radio Branch took over the weather station from the Canadian Army Signal Corps. In the summer of 1954 a serious problem emerged when the RCAF indicated that they did not wish to continue to supply the Ahiarmiut with food and take out their furs as had been customary during the last three years.

In a letter to the RCMP, Cunningham sets out his policy:

From the experience we have had with these people during the past two or three years, we are inclined to think that they are beginning to rely more and more on outside assistance and are not exerting themselves as much as they might do, in obtaining and laying up a sufficient amount of food. We intend, therefore to investigate this situation more fully later in the year, with a view to deciding whether it is worthwhile to continue to maintain this small community at Ennadai Lake or whether we should not make an attempt to have these people moved to an area where they could be more closely supervised and where they would be nearer to a trading post. (CUNNINGHAM 1954a)

And he concludes:

We feel however that the present arrangement calls for too great an expenditure of time and money and accomplishes little except to barely keep this small isolated group alive. We have always considered it a temporary arrangement and feel now that that we should take steps to more adequately take care of this group. (CUNNINGHAM 1954a)

A week later in a memorandum to the Deputy Minister dated August 31, 1954, Cunningham suggests, "It may be possible, however, to interest them in moving to the vicinity of Padlei or Eskimo Point where they used to trade in earlier years, but this is something which we intend to enquire into as opportunity offers during the coming winter." (CUNNINGHAM 1954b)

In a memorandum in June 1955 (quoted in MARCUS 1995: 139) Cunningham pointed out to Larsen of the RCMP that the free servicing of Ennadai would subject the government to increasing criticism from air carriers and traders. He stated "...I don't think the government should give undue consideration to the imagined convenience of this

small and perverse group of ex-Padleimiuts who have apparently become used to and fond of free help from the Ennadai radio station". The notion of perversity probably relates to sexual relationships that had developed between Inuit women and the staff of the radio station. The notion of ex-Padleimiuts probably relates to Birket-Smith's conjecture that the Ahiarmiut may originally have come from the Padlei area.

The question to what extent starvation was really occurring was already a point of controversy at the time. Cunningham reported in his memorandum to the Deputy Minister of August 31, 1954 that:

In a signal received from the army station at Ennadai through the Edmonton Command, it was stated that the Eskimo had been starving; that their general condition was poor, especially the children that they were contracting all sorts of disease and that twelve had been evacuated for hospital treatment. Indian Health Services at our request inquired concerning this report and received a telegram from the Winnipeg Regional Superintendent that reports of starvation at Ennadai were without foundation and that the only cases reaching hospital were ordinary medical ones. Indian Health Services believe that the Superintendent's report may not be based on the latest information and are making further enquiry. (CUNNINGHAM 1954b)

Here, Cunningham's memorandum clearly shows that the idea of relocation was primarily conceived to solve the problem of the assumed dependency of the Ahiarmiut on the weather station. This was economically and morally thought to be unacceptable.

The issue of starvation was at this stage not yet central to the argument. In his memorandum to the Deputy Minister dated January 31, 1956 he states with respect to starvation: "Despite this, there is nothing to indicate that there has been any major catastrophe among these people during the past fifty years." (CUNNINGHAM 1956)

The main issue at the time was therefore less starvation than the costs and the assumed dependency of the Ahiarmiut on the weather station. A solution was found in the appointment of a Northern Service Officer (NSO) to relieve the burden of the weather station. W.G. Kerr was appointed for the job and received his instruction from Sivertz, then chief of the Arctic Division.

But Kerr soon developed his own views. Instead of supporting a move to Padlei, he suggested that a small store or a comparable facility would be opened at Ennadai Lake (SIVERTZ 1955). Sivertz informed Kerr that he was not enthusiastic about his proposition to open a small store at Ennadai. He pointed out again that the solution was to persuade the Ahiarmiut to go nearer to Padlei. He informed Kerr of Nichols' offer to involve Voisey in the matter. Kerr visited the Ahiarmiut on July 2nd 1955, but he did so without Voisey as engine trouble prevented the airplane to pick him up. And Kerr reported: "The natives were in apparently good health and their dogs were tied up and in excellent condition (Kerr 1955). He raised the matter of the relocation with Ahiarmiut:

Through Ohoto, they replied that the Padlei district, where most of them had been was a poor country for game and that they would be hungry there. They were in familiar country at Ennadai and happy there. They said that if they had some ammunition and enough Tea and Tobacco it

would be sufficient to make them contented and that they did not want the Government to do "Too much work for them". The whole discussion was carried on in amiable manner by both sides. (KERR 1955)

He concluded his memorandum in a positive vein:

I cannot help but admire these Eskimo who want to live their own mode of life and are confident of surviving on their own hunting ability rather than on relief rations. The Police, the present staff of the Ennadai radio Station and myself all think they should be encouraged to continue as they are. (Kerr 1955)

In 1955 James Houston spent a few weeks among the Ahiarmiut. In his report he described Ahiarmiut life, observed that they provided moral support to the whites of the radio station and commented that "the least likely solution seems to move them" (HOUSTON 1955; quoted in TESTER & KULCHYSKI 1994: 215). Van den Steenhoven spent several weeks with the Ahiarmiut in the fall. He gave extensive descriptions of the life in the camp of Owljoot and at the time everything seemed fine. (See STEENHOVEN 1956)

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REPRODUCTIONS OF PHOTOS

taken at

Eskimo Point and Ennadai Lake ★)

ESKIMO POINT

1. Aerial view of the settlement: foreground: RC Mission; middle: HBC complex; far background: RCMP complex. Between Mission and HBC: three cottages belonging to Eskimos. Most Eskimo tents are beyond the photo on this side of the mission and near the shore.
2. Tide-wash of ice at Eskimo Point bay shore
3. Deer-skin tent
4. Dogs
5. Testing the drum in my tent
6. Inventory of Akpa's tent, which has been pulled down for a new roof to be sewn
7. Character
8. Rev. L.Ducharme, o.m.i.
9. Cst. W.Gallagher, R.C.M.P.
10. Sunday scene at Mission house
11. "Mixed" group
12. Yearly visit of the H.B.C.'s Fort Garry
13. Akpa peers for deer

ENNADAI LAKE

14. Part of Ennadai Lake near Radio Station; Kiyai in deerskin kayak.
15. Ennadai Barrens
16. Near Owlyoot's camp on September 9.
17. Owlyoot's camp; his large tent is to the right, in front of mine
18. Owlyoot's tent

★) Numbers 35-47 were made by Mr. F.Goro of LIFE MAGAZINE; I gratefully acknowledge the courtesy of that magazine to make reproductions of these photos available to me for the present purpose. Numbers 1-34 were taken by myself and are a selection from my 220 Kodachrome diapositives, which I took during the research with a Kodak Signet camera; the publication of this selection in a Netherlands illustrated magazine, enabled me to include them in this attachment. The photo on page 3 of the report is an enlargement of a close-up of Owlyoot, headman of one Ahearmit camp at Ennadai Lake (also Kodachrome).

Fig. 2a

19. Anowtelik
20. Owlyoot
21. Micki stretching the skin over the willow hoop of the drum
22. Ilungiyuk and ayagark
23. From left to right: Angnukoak(Ungma), Shikoak(Hickewa) and Ootuk
24. Akjar with her baby Igyekah, and Ookanak
25. Nootaraloo, Kahootsuak and Akjar with children at windscreen
26. Wounded deer
27. Owlyoot in hunting attire
28. Owlyoot and Mounik returning from the hunt, with carcasses and skins on the deck of their kayaks
29. Opening the meat bundle, from which the children have already duly taken the roasted bones
30. Meat pot scene at wind break
31. Crushed kayak frame is being repaired by Owlyoot
32. Local willow serves for new ribs
33. The bow-drill is in daily use.
34. Blueberry Express ready in Churchill
35. Camp scene at Owlyoot's
36. Kiyai with fish prong and deer lance
37. Ookanak slices meat for the "nipko" (dried meat)
38. Alikaswa at heap of meat bones
39. Stretching deer skins
40. Owlyoot with bow-drill
41. Nootaraloo scraping soft a skin destined for mittens
42. Nootaraloo braiding sinew-thread for a fishing line
43. Fresh deerskin is stretched out before returning to camp
44. Pike
45. Micki at upturned stone covered with a sod of moss which passing deer take to be waiting hunters
46. "Utile dulci": picking berries in between firewood gathering
47. Anowtelik drumming during one of the evening dance sessions at Owlyoot's

Fig. 2b List of pictures taken by Van den Steenhoven at Ennadai lake in the summer of 1955. Comments clearly suggest a wealthy situation.

However, in the winter of 1955-1956 the situation deteriorated. Cunningham reported to the Deputy Minister on January 31 1956:

All Eskimos were reported to be in a good health but apparently the main herd of caribou had not passed through the district last fall and only a few had been obtained. However, issues of buffalo meat from the Department of Transport's freezer have been made to the Eskimo. ... Sufficient ammunition is on hand and with the supplies they have now received, together with what will be going in, plus what they will earn during the rest of the winter they will have little difficulty in remaining self-supporting. (CUNNINGHAM 1956a)

However, in a memorandum to Sivertz dated April 26 1956, J.P. Richards of the Arctic Division sketched a much gloomier image of the situation at Ennadai Lake. "The natives were ill clothed and they were unable to fend for themselves. They said they were hungry and they looked to be. All seemed to be suffering from heavy colds. The morale and the condition of these natives was so low that they were incapable of making sustained effort in their own behalf." Richards (1956). This negative perception of the natives is well illustrated by an anecdote relating that Mr. Southall had given the natives "300 lbs. of ham that had been condemned because it turned rancid. In reply to a query he said that some of the local dogs had been given the worst of meat to make reasonably sure that the bulk of it was safe to hand to the natives. He said the natives seemed to take it with relish." Richards (1956) argued, "The distressing situation at Ennadai Lake is attributable to no small degree to lack of supervision and guidance of the local natives. They are now low in morale and spirit, but the male members of the group appear to be capable of better effort". Why this specific reference to "the male members of the group"? In the Arviat workshop, the Ahiarmiut elders suggested that the sexual relationships that developed between the men at the radio station and the Ahiarmiut women played a part in the decision to relocate them. One of the elders (Arviat 2005) observed:

We wonder what was the real purpose of this Ahiarmiut relocation. [...] We know those Qallunaat were using two women, and had sex with them, living with them. In fact one of them asked a woman to have sex with her and tried to get after her but she didn't want to be involved with those Qallunaat. Perhaps that was one of the reasons why we were relocated and put on an island. I don't know, I am just wondering because there was something unpleasant at that time when the Qallunaat were using these women. It might not be the main point, but I just wanted to get it out of my chest because during all those years, it bothered me.

The problem of sexual relationship may be behind Richards's assessment. Richards stated, "There is uniform agreement that these natives should be moved to a location where wildlife is more abundant and that they must be given proper supervision then to become re-established elsewhere." In a memorandum dated May 7, 1956, Sivertz (1956) supports Richard's proposal and suggests to assign Douglas Wilkinson to this job and to move Kerr to Frobisher Bay. On June 4, 1956 Kerr attended to a meeting with Cunningham, Phillips Doyle and Richards. The outcome of the meeting was that Kerr would remain in Churchill. The Kivalliq area would now be divided into two zones, the southern part,

including Ennadai and Padlei would continue to be administered by Kerr, the northern zone by Wilkinson. Considering Sivertz' proposal we may infer that Kerr had to prove that he really was the man for the job. The relocation itself was no longer a point of discussion. What was lacking was the approval of the Ahiarmiut themselves.

After this meeting Kerr proved himself a loyal supporter of the idea of relocation that was prepared now. In a letter to Nichols dated June 25, 1956 Cunningham explained that Lewis Voisey, a resident of Eskimo Point would be employed in the capacity of supervisor to live with and assist the natives in becoming established at the new location. (CUNNINGHAM 1956b)

Kerr went to Ennadai Lake on August 2 1956. In his letter to Sivertz of August 3, 1956, he reported that "While at Ennadai lake I held a conference with the heads of the 15 Eskimo families located there and with Henri Voisey as interpreter." (KERR 1956a). Kerr explained that the gist of his argument was:

Last year, as in other year as in other years, there had been no Caribou and they had been hungry without skins for clothing. We had brought food to them but this would not always be possible as we had many Eskimo to look after and the Plane would not be available when the Eskimo were in trouble again at Ennadai Lake. The Radio Station was not a Trading Post and there was Food only for the men who worked there. This year the Radio Station men had been good men and had shared some of their food with the Eskimo, but next year there might be only enough for the Station and the new Men would not want to give it to the Eskimo if they were hungry, for they might have to go hungry themselves. It might happen that next year, too, there would not be any Caribou and they would be hungry again and I could not get the Plane to come and help them because I had to visit many other Eskimo. As their Friend I did not want them to be hungry and so I would like them to be in a place where they could obtain "Whiteman's" food themselves when Game was scarce so that their Wives and Children would not go hungry. This food could be obtained by them putting out many traps and bringing the pelts of the animals they obtained to the Trading post and that each man would get the entire benefit of what he had trapped and not have it used for the benefit of the whole band as at present. As their Friend I would only advise them to go to a district that would be for their good. Henik Lake was suitable place and they would not have to leave their own type of country but only to another part of it. If they were willing to move to Henik Lake we would take them there by Airlift. But if they left Ennadai they were not to move back unless the Government agreed, otherwise we could not promise to help them as in the past. (KERR 1956a)

Kerr relates that he showed the Ahiarmiut a map of Henik Lake. "They were evidently satisfied with the place selected and immediately started to tell Mr. Voisey and myself of all the fishing places and the good camping sites. Without exception they were all in favour of going to Henik Lake and said they would not return to Ennadai unless they talked it over with the Government first." (KERR 1956a). He also stated: "I would emphasize that the conference was held in a friendly atmosphere and the decision of the Eskimo was reached by themselves and no threats or coercion was used." (KERR 1956a). Kerr returned to Churchill that same day.

Today, the Ahiarmiut elders deny that such a meeting ever took place. According to them they were never informed of the plans to relocate them to Henik Lake. This is consistent with contemporary testimonies. Oulijoot, the leader of the Ennadai people, and his wife stated, "We didn't know we were moving (to Henik Lake) till just before we went. Henri Voisey told us the day before. He didn't give any reasons." (This sentence is quoted in appendix B (p. 4) to a memorandum written by Sivertz to the Deputy Minister dated March 28, 1958: see SIVERTZ 1958). As Oulijoot and his wife were recognized as leaders by the Ahiarmiut (see the reports by VAN DEN STEENHOVEN 1957, 1958, 1962) there is no chance that they would not have been aware of such a meeting if it had taken place.

Also, why would the Ahiarmiut agree to go to Henik Lake if they knew perfectly well that it was not good for caribou hunting as indicated by Ohoto in 1955? His assessment is confirmed by Oulijoot and his wife who stated in 1958: "We never got any caribou this side of Ennadai. We had a net out but could only catch one fish. There was enough ammunition but no caribou. We don't know why the caribou didn't come - but there never was much caribou around Henik Lake." (SIVERTZ 1958) Kerr does not specify who the heads of the 15 families were. He must have been aware that Inuit leaders such as Pongalaaq and Oulijoot were the men he should deal with, but he did not mention their names whereas he did specify the name of Ohoto in his report of July 1955.

Clearly Kerr was quite eager to obtain an unanimous approval from the Inuit specifying that the Inuit made their own decisions without any external coercion or threat. However, the gist of his arguments as presented in his letter to Sivertz is full of implicit threats and it is hard to assume that Ahiarmiut will have missed that point. Henri Voisey may also have played a part in the process in his role as interpreter. It would be interesting to have a transcript of the proceedings.

Marcus (1995: 207) suggests that already at the time serious doubts about the consensual nature of the relocation existed. Thus Rowley stated in a memorandum to Robertson that "it appeared unlikely that the move was really accepted by them" (TESTER & KULCHYSKI 1993: 228; MARCUS 1995: 207-208). He also refers to a memorandum of Larsen to the commissioner in 1959 where Larsen points out that "the failure to obtain informed consent had been a flaw in the planning." (MARCUS 1995: 208)

However that may be, once Kerr reported that he had obtained permission from the Ahiarmiut group, an important obstacle to the relocation had been removed and the operation could now go ahead. Sivertz immediately took action to arrange that a RCAF plane would transport the Ahiarmiut in August, but due to mechanical failure of the plane intended for the operation the relocation was delayed to the spring of 1957. According to Kerr (1956b) in his memorandum of September 21 the Ahiarmiut were glad that the project had been postponed. They were all in good health and appeared happy.

The relocations to Henik Lake 1957 and Arviat 1958

On May 10, the first group of Ahiarmiut was relocated and on May 24, the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources proudly announced in a press release, "Eskimos Fly to new hunting grounds". "A community of some of Canada's most primitive citizens has moved - but they did it the modern way. Eskimo hunters and huskies left their ancient ways for a day to travel in the comfort of an aircraft to new hunting grounds". And it concluded, "This is not the first time that Eskimo hunters and their families have volunteered to leave their home because game was scarce. For the same reason, Eskimos from the east coast of Hudson Bay were moved to Cornwallis and Ellesmere islands in 1953. If the success of these earlier settlers is any guide, the Ennadai Eskimos can hope to find relative prosperity in their new surroundings". (DEPARTMENT OF NORTHERN AFFAIRS AND NATIONAL RESOURCES 1957)

The public was informed that the Ennadai people had been relocated and provided with food for a month and ammunition for the summer and new tents. Today, the Ahiarmiut elders, however, relate that they had to leave most of their equipment behind and especially missed their caribou skins at Henik Lake. Eva Muqyunnik related:

Once we got to this new camp, we didn't have those caribou skins, caribou clothing anymore. There were just the white man's food, blankets, things that couldn't really help us to survive. No caribou skin, no sleeping mat whatsoever. Once again we had left our belongings. That is why it was much harder to survive at Henik Lake.

Once again we moved to this new place. We were used to burn wood in a stove to keep warm but we were not used to having a Coleman stove. We were not used to this new equipment that they gave us. Therefore we were like kids learning all over again with this new equipment. Because we have survived on caribou skins, caribou clothing, wood stoves. We were used to all these things, but we were not used to that brand new equipment, store bought food. We had a hard time surviving because in that area there were no small animals such as ptarmigan and rabbits we could find. So therefore once again we were having a hard time. It makes me wonder why this had to happen. Why all the relocation all over again. What was the purpose of it? Was it abuse? Are they mad at us? What is happening?' All that comes to my mind.

In Ennadai Lake there were plenty of animals but in Henik Lake, like it is said in the papers, there was only white man's food. But that didn't last us very long because it was very little. After that, the food was gone right away. So after that we went hungry again. There was no fish around in this new location, and the family was so large. My mother-in-law, Nutaraaluk, had ten children. Beside those ten children there was the rest of the family to feed. Every time Muqyunnik and Anautalik got a ptarmigan or a rabbit, that one bird was divided among 10 children. We each had a little piece since it had to last. We all had to eat, even if there was so many of us.

It was in winter. It came to a time when we had to burn the skin by removing the hair of the skin and eat the hide, because there was no food.

Once in this second camp, in the place called Haningajualaq at Henik Lake, it was the worst winter because we were all starving. And we would go to Henry Voisey's camp for food. But he would not give us any.

It was during the time that my father in law, Aulatjut, myself and my baby Tablu stayed in bed all day and night to keep warm, to survive. That was the hardest time that winter because the weather was very cold.

My baby was newborn. I would try to feed him but I had no milk at all. So we had a hard time. There was no food at all for us, not even for the newborn to have milk from me. (ARVIAT 2005)



Fig. 3 Eva Muqyunnik at her house, Arviat 2005 (Photo by F. Laugrand)

Kerr was present at the relocation on May 10 but did not stay for long. Instead he decided to send Lewis Voisey in the fall to supervise the Ahiarmiut. In total, 59 Inuit were relocated (see MARCUS 1995: 230-231 for the detailed list).

The Ahiarmiut immediately found life at Henik Lake very hard. Oulijoot related to Farley Mowat:

We were surprised when the white men told us this was a good place for caribou, for we knew it was a hungry country. All the same it was the right time for the deer to come north and we needed meat. The food that had been left for us only lasted a few days. Our people were hungry and they ate a lot. The white men had made pitch the tents under a big hill. We knew this to be an evil place but we let the tents stay there for a while and took our rifles and went looking for deer trails and crossing places. We found no trails. We knew there had not been any deer in this place for a long time because there were no old trails. After a while we came back to the tents and we decided to move because we were afraid of the hill spirits.

We knew we could not go back to our own country, but we thought if we went a little way to the west we might find level ground where the deer might pass. Some of the people would not move, because they said it was no use. So they stayed at the camp the white men had chosen for us. They were Pommela, Alekahaw and Onekwaw. All the rest of us walked for a day to the southwest until we had crossed the big hills and reached some little lakes where we could see flat country to the west. Here we set up our camps. There was lots of wood here, and we had fires, but we had no food. There were some ptarmigan but not enough to be much use. We tried to fish in the lakes, but the ice was thick (it would then have been from six to eight feet in thickness), and when we had cut through it we did not catch any fish by jigging. I do not think there were any fish in those lakes.

It was on the second day after we had come to Henik that we moved to the new place. While we were making the new camp we heard some airplanes flying to the southwest and Anoteelik thought they were landing. So he and Mounik and another walked that way. They found some white men with a big camp, and with a tractor, and one of the white men gave them some food.

The next day all the men walked to that camp and they gave us food again, but they did not have very much to give us.

One day Alekahaw arrived at our camp and said that Pommela had died and that he had starved to death. He said there was nothing to eat at the first camp and so he had come to see if there was food where we were. We did not have any food, for no deer had come at all and we could not get any fish. Some thought we ought to walk back to our own country but it was too far when the children were hungry, and anyway the white men had told us we had to stay where we were.

One day a white man from the camp came to visit us with Anoteelik. He slept with us and went back the next day. He said he would send a message that we were hungry and that some food would be brought in. Nothing happened for a long time. We were all hungry, but the white men at the camp could not give us much food. Mostly we stayed in the tents and some people wished they had run away and hidden when the plane came to Ennadai to take us away. (MOWAT 1982: 213-214)

According to Mowat this white man was P. Lynn who reported the plight of the Ennadai Lake Inuit to the RCMP Constable in Churchill who informed the authorities about Lynn's report.

Kerr visited the Ennadai Lake people again on June 5, 1957 and found that the caribou had not been seen, but that they obtained fish enough. Pongalak, who had been an important leader, had died in May (KERR 1957a). In a memorandum dated August 8, Kerr (1957c) reports the arrest of Ohoto and Muqyunnik on August 6, 1957 for theft of supplies and equipment from the camp of the Sherrit-Gordon Morning Corporation at Bray Lake on June 6, 1957.

Muqyunnik recalled:

I was one of the people who got arrested because there were three of us.

What really happened is that three of us got arrested. There was Uutuq, Ayaut and myself. Ayaut's wife had two small boys (and Kukijuaq) who were crying for food. The children were crying for food and we had been hunting for nine days without seeing any caribou. When we got to the building, Ayaut broke the lock of the building to feed the children. Later on, we found out that we were breaking the law. All we took was opened flour, a half bag of flour and a piece of lard cut in half. That's all we took, and that's how we got arrested. The food we took was on a table.

The two men were taken to Eskimo Point (now Arviat). The arrests immediately affected

their families. Eva Muqyunnik reported that after the RCMP had arrested Muqyunnik, while he was in custody, Eva had a baby.

It was during the time when there was absolutely no food. Because he was one of the hunters they had a very hard time. For up to five days they hardly had anything to eat. Even though they went to the post in Padlei, they were refused twice. So they had nothing to eat. Because they were so hungry, they burned the skin [of a caribou], the hair, so they could eat the hide, so they had something to eat. (ARVIAT 2005)

Today, the Ahiarmiut Elders maintain that Ohoto (Uutuq) and Muqyunnik committed the theft because there was already starvation and that they only took a very limited quantity of food. However, the two Ahiarmiut were considered as “ringleaders” (see PHILLIPS 1957a) and were duly prosecuted. Unfortunately Ohoto became blind as a result of his detainment. Mary Whitmore related that Muqyunnik told her how her father became blind. When they were in jail, the RCMP made them work, carrying heavy rocks to the beach area. They were working on this big piece of rock when accidentally a splinter hit his eye and he became blind. After that, he went to the hospital and came back again but he never saw again. She said, “I am glad to know that because I’ve been wondering all those years. My mother was not even told what happened to my father. [...] Years later, back in Arviat, because my father was blind, he couldn’t see, he froze to death near the community. Every time I see the little ditch he died in, it reminded me of him all over again. [...] I have this in my chest for so many years and I finally got rid of it.”

Kerr reports that the Eskimo were shooting caribou in small numbers and catching sufficient fish. They were not hungry and in good health. In the mean time Lewis Voisey was brought in to prepare the Ennadai people for the winter. Later, on March 16, 1958 Kerr reported, in a memorandum to the Chief of the Arctic Division:

In the first part of September I brought Lewis Voisey to Henik Lake, where he set up camp. He stayed with the Eskimos and supervised and prodded them into putting up fish and instructing them on catching and properly repairing caribou meat for storage for winter use. He was instructed to place special emphasis on saving all suitable caribou skins and the making of winter clothing for all. I then left for Ottawa on "leave" and at the completion of it I was posted to Rankin Inlet. Mr. Voisey was brought out from Henik Lake just before "freeze up" in early October, as his supplies were depleted and there was no other accommodation for him for the coming winter outside of a tent. (Kerr 1958b)

Thus the Ahiarmiut, pretty much in the same condition, were left on their own. Wilkinson (1957) reported on September 25 1957 that Louis Voisey was not too hopeful about the adequacy of the future food supply of the group. If a large herd would not wander into the area, they would be without winter food. Wilkinson thought they would require assistance.

Ahiarmiut elders recall the starvation of that winter. Mary Anautalik related that she told

her husband, Anautalik, that her father could no longer get up.

Anautalik said to me “I will go to Padlei to see if they give us some food. While I’m gone, why don’t you take skin down and remove the hair, chew the hide and put it in his mouth to see if he would chew it.” [...] I did what Anautalik asked me to do. So I grabbed a big piece of hide from the covers, removed the hair and I chewed it a long time, and when it was good and wet I put it into his mouth, my father’s mouth, and he swallowed it. At least he had something in his stomach. (ARVIAT 2005)

Alikashuak related:

I remember my father told us that he would go out fishing. It was cold outside, and stormy. The wind was coming from the North, so you can imagine how cold it was. My mother knew there was no food. She tried to breast feed us one by one. First of all, she tried to breast feed me, and then after me it would be my brother Andy, after Andy it was my little sister Eva. When she realized she couldn’t breast feed us, she cut the soles of the kamik, both of them and burned them so we had something to chew on. (ARVIAT 2005)

Mary Anautalik related that her little sister died, because her mother was unable to breastfeed her:

Even though my mother tried to breast feed her, she couldn’t feed her so she died. I was the one who look after the body as well. So it has been very hard for me. I have never seen my father having so much hard time else then that time when he couldn’t get up. He was always able to do something, always able to hunt. My little sister would have been adult just like us, only a bit younger than me. But she never had a chance to grow up because we were relocated to a different place. Perhaps if we had stayed in Ennadai Lake, she would have survived because we would have enough food and know what to do. (ARVIAT 2005)

By December 1957 the Canadian authorities were well aware that the caribou had not come and that the Ahiarmiut therefore were in serious trouble. Their response was to revive the discourse on the incapacity of the Ennadai people to take care of their own life. On December 3, Kerr (1957b) observes, “I do not think that I, or anyone else, could get them to shake of their lethargy about providing for themselves. They will agree to follow any program to better themselves that is suggested to them and then go back to their former ways and blithely forget their promises”. He proposes to locate them in the Churchill area and integrate them in a wage earning economy. At the same time December 3 Corporal Gallagher proposes to move the Ennadai Lake people to Tavani, North of Eskimo Point.

Unfortunately, the proposals by Kerr and Gallagher contain no suggestions how to deal with the increasing starvation at Henik Lake. They seem aware that things are going wrong at Henik Lake but appear too busy with their visions of the future to concern themselves with what is happening in the present.

G. Rowley seems to have been better aware of these problems. In a memorandum to the director of Northern Affairs, Phillips comments on the notes the director made of Rowley's

views:

1. He thinks these people have been moved too much, and that their decision to move - to Ennadai- to Nueltin- to Henik- was probably because they regarded it as a command of the white man

They have now lost leadership, lost confidence and are afraid - This is reason for theft.

2. It is no good moving to Tavani - a strange and unwelcome land

They are not ready to go to Churchill

They like Ennadai and probably would drift back if left to themselves.

3 What is need now is some person to go among them as an N.S.O. staying for three or four years and - dedicated like a missionary - at their preferred location at Ennadai. (1958a)

Rowley was probably thinking of Geert van den Steenhoven. In 1981 he pointed out that van den Steenhoven "suggested to the administration that they return to the area they knew, and he offered to go live with them to see that they prospered and to summons help if it were needed." (ROWLEY 1981: 227). However, the administration rejected the proposal.

Phillips comments: "I cannot agree with this solution. Our entire policy of Arctic development must rest upon sound economic foundations. I think it would be folly to encourage people to move to an area where we know that there is not a solid economic basis for their future lives" (PHILIPPS 1958).

Rowley's assessment of leadership agrees with that of the Ahiarmiut elders. They explain that at Henik Lake traditional leadership patterns broke down and sharing stopped. The position of a leader was to an important extent based on his knowledge of the land and the game. In an unfamiliar area where the game was not available leadership became pointless and everyone tried to survive in his own way.

But in January 1958 the situation only worsened, Job Muqyunnik gave an account of the death of Qajait in January 1958:

Once I got into the igloo, I saw him lying down inside. He had his hood up; his face was covered with his hood. So I opened the hood. He opened his eyes. I tried to talk to him but he couldn't answer, because he was starving. He was not able to get up and talk anymore. I removed my outer coat, put him inside and took him to Padlei. It was 2 o'clock when I left there.

When I left at 2 o'clock that afternoon, we arrived at 10 pm in the evening. But before getting into Eskimo Padlei, I stopped three times to rest. I didn't have any dogs, but I was pulling him with me. Once in a while I would stop, and feel his mouth to make sure he was still alive. Every time I moved my hand and touch his mouth, he would move his mouth. He did that twice. First, I stopped at the lake, and then I went up the hill. Just before going down from the hill, I touched his mouth again to make sure he was still alive. Just before reaching the Eskimo Padlei, - it was not very far anymore, probably the distance of the water reservoir, just West of us -, before moving on to start walking there again, although it was very close to the building, I touched his mouth again. But this time it was cold and he was not moving his mouth anymore. I knew that he had died. So I

stopped, and just rested right beside my little *qamutik*.

Because I knew he had died and the buildings were very close, I left him at the *qamutik* and him, and I ran. Because in those days I ran, I could go around very actively. So I ran to Henry Voisey's place, to the building, and told them what happened.

Once I got into Henry Voisey building, there was still light in the building. I knew they were up. So I knocked on the door, and Henry opened it. And I told him that I found Qajait but that he had died on the way. I told him that he almost got up to here but finally died. I told him that. He opened the door and asked me to come to him. He took me to a room and told me that I had killed Qajait: "You have killed him, so I have to call the RCMP". And then he put me in the room in front of the table and closed the door and nailed it. He told me that he was going to call the RCMP thinking I had killed Qajait.

The next day, Henry Voisey and an RCMP agent took me to the body. They held my arm all the way to the body, fearing I would run away and thinking that I killed him. Once they got there, the RCMP agent had a knife and he cut the coat all the way down, and studied the body to see if there were any marks. After he did that, knowing that there was no mark, the RCMP agent put down his head and stayed there for a while.

When the RCMP cut up the clothing in front all the way down, you could see Qajait's body had turned all black. It was just bones, there was no meat. He died of starvation.

After that they put the body up where there was a piece of wood. They put it on top of that to keep it off the ground. After they did that, we had tea, and Henry Voisey kept asking me where I started to walk from, where I came from and how long it took me to walk to Padlei. I kept telling him that I left at 2 o'clock in the afternoon that day in January and got there that evening, at 10 pm. He kept saying I was lying. All that time he told me I was lying. Right beside him was the RCMP agent who was continually moving his head, knowing that he agreed with Henry. They didn't believe me. After a while, Henry said, "Why don't we check your footprints to make sure you are telling the truth? Let's follow your footprints to make sure you are telling the truth. From here to the place you started walking."

We kept following my footsteps. Once in a while, I would look back to the RCMP agent who was following us. Every time I looked back, he would shake his head at me. All that time Henry was asking, "Where is the place. Where is the place? Are we there yet? Are we close now?" We kept walking until we got to this igloo that was partly made. At sun down we finally reached it. We finally got there. Once we got there, I guess they finally believed that I walked all the way from that partly made *iglu* to the buildings. Once we stopped there, we made tea and I was fed. We ate, but Henry Voisey didn't even eat himself. He was suddenly very busy picturing the sled and all that.

When we went back to Padlei, Henry told me to sleep over at Qarjuk's place. He told me to come back in the morning.

The next day I went back to Henry Voisey's place. Once I got there, the RCMP agent gave me a piece of paper and he told me, "Give this paper to Henry". So I did. When I gave the paper to Henry, he said, "Let's go to the store".

After going to the store, I went back to the buildings. Just before I started walking home again, to my camp, Henry Voisey told me "Tell everybody to come to my camp, to Padlei. Anybody you see along the way, tell them to come to Padlei." It was at that time that we were relocated to Arviat. (ARVIAT 2005)

The administration was not sure how to deal with the situation. On February 6, 1958, G.D. Ruttan of Sherrit Gordon Mines reported a new break in (RUTTAN 1958) and NSO officer Kennedy replied to Ruttan on February 13, 1958 explaining:

The people at Oftedal Lake are not a representative group of Eskimo. They together with a few other small bands living on the barrens constitute the last remaining examples of "primitive" Eskimos. They are, for the most part "pagans". Almost exclusively, they depend upon the migrating caribou herds to provide them with meat for food and with skins and sinews for clothing. The caribou herds, as you must know, have declined drastically during the last few years. This year there have been no caribou in the Oftedal Lake area and this has meant much hardship and misery for the Eskimos. I do not wish to excuse their conduct but it maybe that prolonged hunger will often dull a man's conscience. (KENNEDY 1958a)

But Kennedy was well aware that things had gone astray at Henik Lake. In a memorandum to Phillips dated February 13, 1958 he states:

From what I can gather conditions are serious both at Oftedal Lake and at Padlei. Almost every family is receiving relief rations either as such or in the disguise of increased family allowance benefits. Two men of the Padlei group have died of frostbite and exposure during the past month. Another has been brought here to hospital in an extremely emaciated condition. (KENNEDY 1958b)

On February 14, news of the murders at North Henik Lake, usually referred to as the Kikkik case, reached the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources from RCMP Supt. Larsen:

For your information the Eskimos concerned are the Ennadai Lake Eskimos who were moved from Ennadai Lake last year to North Henik Lake and it appears that this move has not proven very successful, and we are recommending to the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources that they consider the recommendation and of the NCOI/C Eskimo Point Detachment to move these Eskimos from Henik Lake to Eskimo Point as soon as possible in order that they can be given proper supervision and guidance. (LARSEN 1958)

Phillips contacted Kerr who sent the following telegram on February 15, 1958:

Arrived Eskimo Point today stop proceeding Henik tomorrow stop preliminary police investigation discloses evidence of dementia praecox among Eskimo concerned stop sufficient country produce in district for needs of Eskimo stop no question of starvation involved stop will take necessary action for welfare of all concerned. (KERR 1958b)

On February 17, 1958 Richards informs Phillips that the relocation to Eskimo Point has started. In his memorandum of February 23, 1958, Kerr reports that thirty-three people have been relocated to Arviat and that ten more will be brought from Padlei. In this memorandum Kerr defends his policy pointing out:

These would have to be moved either this year or, the most, next year. In spite of all the help given them, they were incapable of looking after themselves without supervision. It was only a question of time before they would have to be guided into the inevitable wage economy that will replace their old mode of life.

As they are at present, bewildered by events, they had to be brought out of their area. Beset by their many taboos and superstitions, they cannot seem to grasp the need for saving from the plenty of today for the famine of tomorrow.

Henry Voisey, post manager at Padlei, and who has dealt with the Padlei Eskimos of the same stock, for over fourteen continuous years has stated that he can do nothing with the Henik Lake

Eskimos. It is not that they are stubborn or resistant to White Man's guidance and advice, but rather that they appear to be confident that food and shelter will be provided without any effort on their part. (KERR 1958a)

Thus Kerr puts the blame firmly on the Ennadai people, especially on their attitude to life. With regard to their condition he observes rather surprisingly, "They are all in good health and their appearance other than their clothes, is that of well-fed people. The children, especially, appear robust and vigorous."

The tendency to put the blame on the Ahiarmiut was also clearly expressed in a letter from Phillips to Ruttan on February 25, 1958, qualifying the Ahiarmiut as "with a few other small bands living on the Barrens, ... the last remaining examples of truly primitive Eskimos." He explained to Ruttan:

Frankly, we are exceedingly disturbed by what has taken place. Outright vandalism has rarely, if ever, been associated with the Eskimo people in any part of the Arctic. Murders have occurred before, but with this group they may well be a reflection of some deep malaise. What this wrong is, we do not yet know. Neither do we know the underlying causes of their behaviour. It may result in part from a history of inbreeding; it may in part be a reflection of the disturbing influences that have come into their lives in the past twenty years or it may come from a powerful malcontent in the group provoking the others. Whatever it is, we are determined to find the causes of this trouble and after careful study to take appropriate remedial action. (PHILLIPS 1958c)

However, the administration, as well as the general public, were soon convinced that a major disaster had happened and it was especially the Kikkik case that did the job. Ootuk, stepbrother of Kikkik and her husband Hallauk were camping with their children at North Henik Lake. Ootuk's son had already died of starvation. Ootuk shot Hallauk while he was jigging for fish on the lake. Then Kikkik and Ootuk fought with each other. Kikkik told one of her children to give her a knife and she stabbed Ootuk who was trying to shoot her. Kikkik then went with her five children to Padlei. They met some other people on the way to Padlei but could not keep up with them. They told them to wait in an igloo while they continued to Padlei. They waited for five days. The Kikkik decided to leave two children behind. She buried them in a caribou sleeping bag in the snow, and with the other three went on to Padlei. The others had already reached Padlei. The manager warned the RCMP in Arviat and Corporal Callagher and Constable Laliberte chartered an airplane to search for the survivors. They found Kikkik and her children, not far from Padlei. When Kikkik told them her other children were dead they went to look for them and found the igloo with one of the children dead and the other one alive. This case received a lot of attention in the international press. A trial started on April 14, 1958 where Kikkik was acquitted from murder on both charges.

The case of Kikkik (see also the film recollection by ELISAPEE KARETAK 2000) received attention as the predicament of a terrible choice a woman might have to make in extreme

conditions. Dorothy Eber (1997) connected it to Sophie's choice in her discussion of the case in *Images of Justice*. The actions of Kikkik were seen in the perspective of starvation. The killing of Ootuk was assessed as self-defence. The leaving of her children behind as a choice a woman might have to make in the terrible conditions of starvation. That this starvation was by no means a natural phenomenon, but the result of a relocation of the Ahiamiut to another area by the Government hardly was given any attention. Thus the trial deflected the attention of the general public from the relocation to the individual case of Kikkik. After her trial she settled in Arviat. But what happened to the other survivors?

They were flown into Arviat and housed in the RCMP Garage. Their caribou skin clothes were taken away and destroyed because lice infected them. The relocated ones then received Qallunaat clothing. Today, the Ahiamiut elders relate that they were bewildered by what happened.

They received buffalo meat. During the night they looked for warmth in a room where the stove was. There was an explosion, covering them all with smoke and soot. Even today some elders wonder whether that was an attempt to destroy them. Mary Anautalik reflected:

Once we went to bed at the RCMP garage, everybody went to sleep. But in a little room there was a furnace. During that night, when got in there it was nice and warm but during the night, the furnace blew-up and there was dust all over the place, including our eyes, our faces our ears. People were not treated well. I can't help but wonder why did it happen that night? Was it planned to get rid of us? (ARVIAT 2005)

Clearly Ahiamiut had lost all confidence in the RCMP. They felt completely unwelcome and badly treated. Mary Anautalik (ARVIAT 2005) related how Corporal Gallagher interrupted a drum dance they wished to organize when they were celebrating their return, because they were making too much noise. Gallagher (known by Inuit as Galigarjuaq) attempted to break the drum on his knee and struck it on the head of an elder woman. Finally an old woman handed him a knife so he could destroy the drum. It was hard for the elders not to assume that the Qallunaat wished their culture and traditions destroyed. They were sent out of the community carrying all their belongings and one of the women who was pregnant miscarried as a consequence. Mary Anautalik (2008) relates that when they were allowed to return they were received better.

Their culture was officially declared dead. In 1958 Rudnicki reported in his report of field trip to Eskimo Point (see Appendix B):

The Ahiamiut as Rasmussen knew them, and more recently Steenhoven, are no more. This is a reality confronting both those who wished to see this culture preserved and those who are left with the problem of a new life for the survivors.

The last of the Ahiamiut are living in six igloos beside the policeman's house at Eskimo Point. They no longer have dogs, sleds, kayaks or any other of the accoutrements of a way of life on the land. With no more caribou to hunt, they no longer have any aim in life. Their present existence is based on only one awareness - that they are absolutely dependent on the white man. (RUDNICKI 1958)

But the Qallunaat had no place for them in Arviat. From Arviat they were moved by ship first to Whale Cove and a few months later to Rankin Inlet (see TESTER & KULCHYSCKI 1994: 274 ff. for the Whale Cove Relocation). The Ahiarmiut had lost complete control over their lives. Most of them ended up in Rankin and remained there for a few years. In the 1960's most of the Ahiarmiut returned, first to Whale Cove, then to Arviat. But the scars of the relocations remained and they never received any explanation or apology from the Government.

Discussion

The Ahiarmiut never understood why they were relocated. During the Arviat workshop they often raised that question. Mary Aunatalik (Arviat 2005) stated:

I am wondering what the purpose of the relocation was. Was it because they wanted our land, because they wanted the land for themselves, or was it because we were just in the way? These are questions that came up to our mind when we think about relocations.

Eva Muqyunnik related:

I am also wondering because one summer while the Ahiarmiut were visiting Ennadai Lake, one of the ladies who could speak English came to me and said: 'Can I tell you something ?' And I said 'Yes, please tell me'. 'Do you know that it is stated in a letter that the Ahiarmiut are just seekers of food. They want food all the time. They are nothing but trouble, they are always after food.'

Job Muqyunnik suggested:

It seems that in those days, the Qallunaat living at the weather station, would come to us wanting to sleep with our wives. When we refused them, then the trouble seemed to start from there. Maybe that's one of the reasons because they couldn't use our women. Things started to get complicated then. Once we make it clear to them that we would not share our women with the Qallunaat men, it started to get difficult after that. When we were going to their camp to trade, even before we got to their place they would go outside and signal us to go away" (ARVIAT 2005).

Thus the Ahiarmiut elders still speculate about the reasons why they were relocated as no satisfactory explanation was ever given to them, The decision for the relocation was made in Ottawa, and Sivertz, first as chief of the Arctic Division, later as Director of the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources, skilfully executed it and defended it. The relocation was mainly founded on economic and moral considerations.

The administration considered the Ahiarmiut as a primitive people that should be integrated into Canadian society. Their existence should have a sound economic base. They were considered as a "primitive", "lazy" and "indolent" people with "loose morals". For that reason they should be removed from the weather station. Their presence resulted in undesirable relations between Ahiarmiut women and the crew of the weather station and like elsewhere (see in Frobisher Bay), they were not supposed to remain there in contact with the Army. The Ahiarmiut group was to be moved to an area where they could

be guided and supervised. The fact that the Aharmiut considered the Ennadai Lake as their home and an excellent hunting area did not affect this point of view in the least. The issue whether they should be transported to an area where they could not rely on support and should be able to provide for themselves or be integrated in modern Canadian economy and removed to a community such as Churchill remained an issue of debate.

In his negative assessment of the Ennadai Lake area Sivertz (1959) relies on the popular books of Farley Mowat and not on the careful ethnographic descriptions of Geert van den Steenhoven that were also made available to the DNAND. Mowat wrote extensively about the Aharmiut (See Mowat 1952, 1959a and b, 2000) but many of these texts remain controversial. Van den Steenhoven provides a much more favourable image of life in the Ennadai Lake area (see also Laliberte 1955). In selecting Henik Lake the administration completely disregarded Aharmiut views of the area. They were convinced that they were in the position to make a more adequate assessment of the hunting potential of an area than the native people themselves. The illusion that the white man had to instruct the Aharmiut where and how to hunt is a recurrent element in the archival documents.

Thus Lt Col Grant observed:

The extremely primitive existence led by the natives and the almost sub-human level of intelligence displayed by the group made them very susceptible to epidemics and famines. They came in time to depend almost entirely on the station personnel, who regularly inspected them for injury or disease, told them when and where to hunt and fish, and acted as agents to dispose of any furs caught during the winter (GRANT 1958).

The administration at the time was insufficiently aware that hunting knowledge of the land has to be built over time. When the Ennadai people were relocated to Henik Lake, their primary asset, the knowledge of the land of Ennadai Lake, lost its relevance. They had to explore a largely unknown area.

Helen Agaaqtuq Konek (2006) who grew up at Henik Lake related that there is plenty of game around Henik Lake, but you have to know the land to locate it and to hunt it. You have to know where the good fishing spots are, where the caribou crossings are etc.

The administration had always claimed that the Aharmiut needed supervision and guidance, but exactly on this point it failed utterly. Some visits were made during the summer, and Lewis Voisey spent a month, in September, and was then airlifted out because he was out of supplies. After that nobody made any attempt to supervise or guide the Aharmiut or even to assess the situation. Kerr had taken his leave in Ottawa. The Aharmiut frequently visited Voisey in Padlei, and it is unlikely that he was not aware of their predicament. However he saw no need to inform the authorities until it was too late. By that time the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources realised that they had completely failed in supervising the process and they attempted to find out what Lewis Voisey had been doing.

Fortunately for the Department public attention switched to the Kikkik case that became a strong public image of the inherent problems of primitive life. The Ahiarmiut elders did not discuss these killings with us as they took part in another area and they had not personally witnessed them. In our interviews Job and Eva Muqyunnik strongly denied that there were any rules prohibiting them from fishing and up to this day the question of rules has remained a sensitive issue among the Ahiarmiut. The idea that the Ahiarmiut themselves were to some extent to be blamed seems to be at the root of this perception of Ahiarmiut rules and unfortunately the failure of the relocation itself was never satisfactorily investigated.

The relocation experiment was intended to improve the situation of the Ahiarmiut. It implied a structural conflict between native Inuit culture and modern Canadian society. Native culture was only to be tolerated to the extent that it allowed itself to be integrated in the encompassing framework of Canadian society. The existence of a primitive society living off the land, cut off from the rest of Canadian society was unacceptable. The famous *Life* publication of 1956, depicting the Ahiarmiut as a stone-age people (see Marcus 1998) as well as Mowat's books played an important role in creating of the image of the Ahiarmiut as a primitive people bound for extinction. In his memorandum of March 9, 1959 Sivertz explains that the image of the "noble savage" should be rejected:

Their inability to provide for themselves without the shattering catastrophes that have kept their numbers low through death-rates and infant mortality that shock civilized people, clearly show that we cannot afford a "laissez-faire" attitude. Experience has shown that there is strong need for close supervision, technical assistance and well-planned education. (SIVERTZ 1959)

The perceptions of the administration and Inuit with regard to starvation also appear contradictory. The administration emphasized the occasional periods of starvation and the relief that had to be provided. Ahiarmiut describe Ennadai Lake as an excellent hunting area that provided sufficient animals for them to survive. These conflicting visions are not based on different perceptions of facts, but on different values. The Ahiarmiut were a nomadic hunting people, and they knew that incidental periods of starvation were unavoidable but part of their lives. Stories of starvation are part and parcel of their cultural heritage (see CSONKA 1992, 1995). Even in the best hunting area the game may fail to appear. This is a fact of life and does not in the least affect their positive assessment of the Ennadai Lake Area. For the administration, however, starvation was unacceptable, especially if it would become known internationally.

This conflict of views is clearly expressed by Sivertz in his memorandum of March 9, 1959: "Frequent cases of starvation among the Eskimos are historical fact and, in the past, have been accepted as part of their way of life. However, in these times, starvation is no longer acceptable." (SIVERTZ 1959) The consequence of this position was that either the

administration would have to continue to provide assistance in times of scarcity, or to force the Ahiarmiut to give up their nomadic hunting life. The former option was unacceptable for economic as well as ideological reasons and therefore the latter was gradually implemented even though it implied a destruction of Ahiarmiut culture, traditions and ways of life. The Ahiarmiut were given no choice and the agreement that was suggested in documents only existed on paper. The Federal Government took over control of the life of the Ahiarmiut and in doing so destroyed the structure of their society. Muqyunnik related:

The government took over the leadership. They took the power. It's like taking the power from the leaders, from our parents. Because we no longer had any power, we just did what ever the government told us to do. Looking back at the time I became an adult, I started to think about what it was like for my parents and other Ahiarmiut. Once the government started taking control over Ahiarmiut, the hardship seemed to start. (ARVIAT 2005)

He observed that the destruction of Ahiarmiut leadership and the fragmentation of Ahiarmiut society that it entailed also terminated the tradition of sharing food, a central value of Inuit society:

Because the life changed completely, we didn't have a real leader any more. The government started to lead us instead of our leader. Everything changed. When everything changed we no longer lived like we did in Ennadai Lake. People started to have a hardship. In fact, four people died Pongalaq, Qajait, Angatarjuaq and Angmak died of starvation. [...] back in Ennadai Lake people were sharing whatever they had. But once they were moved to Henik Lake they were no longer sharing everything they had. They were each looking after their own family. Life changed. Therefore, some people died of starvation. (ARVIAT 2005)

Up to this day the memories of the relocations have continued to put a shadow over the lives of the Ahiarmiut elders. Their children know relatively little about these events as the elder preferred not to discuss them with younger generations so that anger and rancour would not be passed on from one generation to the next.

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