



In Torngak's Realm: The Nineteenth-Century Photography of Moravian Missionaries in Labrador

Introduction

Labrador – for many *qallunaat* the name has been synonymous with a bleak and barren landscape, an ice-scoured wilderness, isolated and forlorn. While it was among the first lands in the New World to be visited by Europeans, it remained among the last to be mapped. Prior to the inroads of the missionaries it was inhabited by malevolent spirits, by Torngak. It was, in the celebrated words of Jacques Cartier – who despaired of ever finding a harbour – the 'land that God gave Cain'. Yet this Cain's Land, this realm of Torngak, was home for small bands of scattered Inuit families whose knowledge and skills had made that land their home.

Following an initial disastrous attempt in 1752, the United Brethren, the Moravian Church, was successful in establishing a mission to the Inuit of Labrador in 1771 (Davey 1905; Hiller 1966, 1971; H. Kleivan 1966). The first settlement at Nain soon expanded to include 'Christian Inuit communities' at Okak (1776), Hopedale (1782) and Hebron (1830). During the later nineteenth century additional mission stations were established so that the Moravian hegemony extended along the entire Labrador coast between Hamilton Inlet and Ungava Bay (fig. 1).

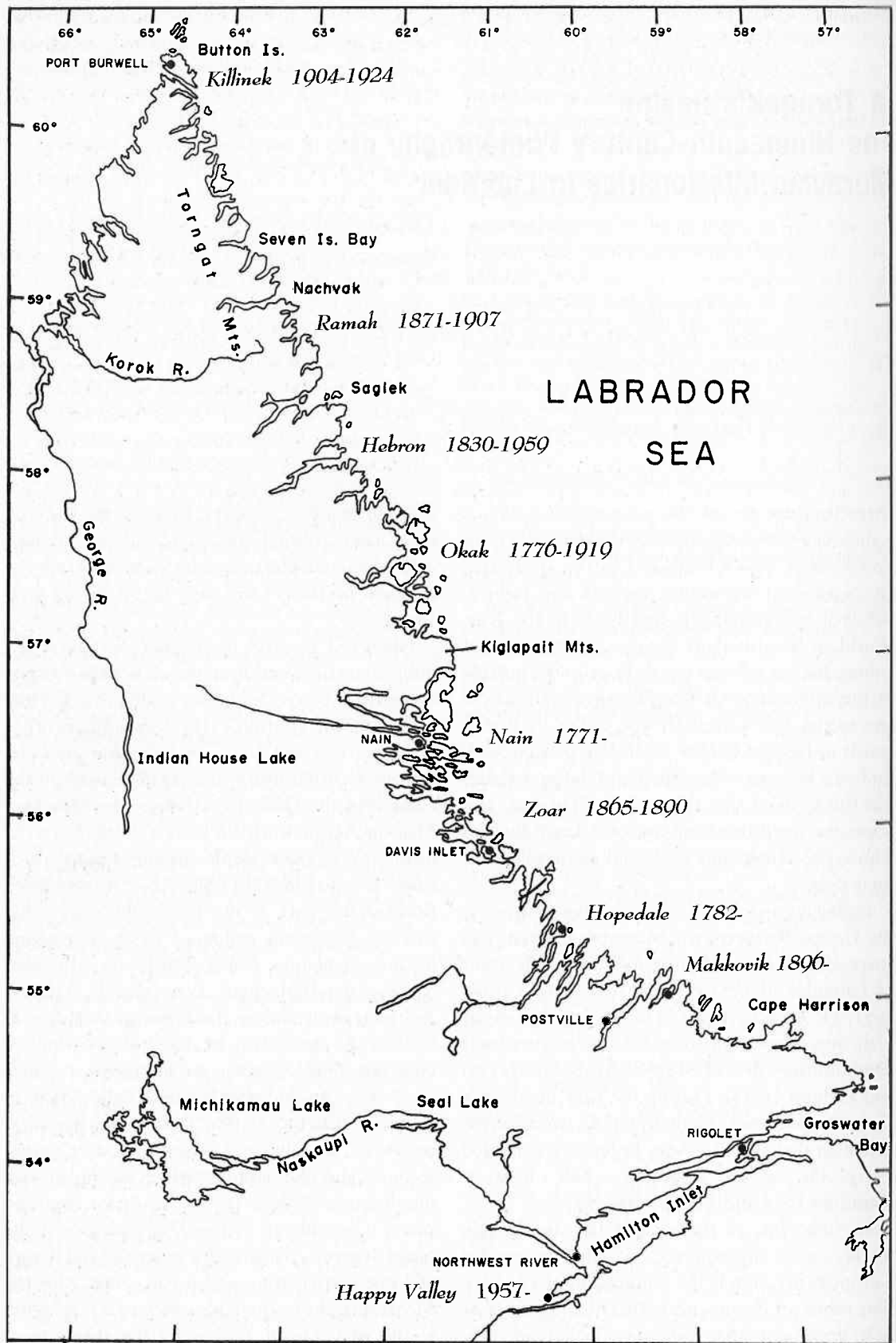
In Labrador, as throughout the non-literate world, one consequence of the successful European invasion is the domination of a history that relies on documents rather than oral tradition; documents that justify an ideology of colonialism and which shape, manipulate and interpret perceptions of the past. Western scholarship, its science and letters, has for the most part marginalised the voice of indigenous peoples. This lopsided view of culture and history has had a devastating impact on recent genera-

tions of northern villagers, who, having suffered from having much of their cultural heritage defined by outsiders, are only now asserting the primacy of their voice and the voice of their ancestors.

Historical research pertaining to Labrador's indigenous Inuit and Innu populations brings one up against two extraordinary archives: (1) the records of the Hudson's Bay Company, incorporated in 1670 and active in Labrador since the late eighteenth century, and (2) the records of the Church of the United Brethren – the Moravian Mission. Much of what is known about the recent history of the Inuit people of Labrador is derived from the writings of Moravian missionaries. Fortunately, part of the Protestant work ethic that the Moravians embraced was a compulsion for documentation. Consequently, the Moravian Archives (at Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, London and Herrnhut, and in the National Archives of Canada and the Provincial Archives in St John's, Newfoundland) contain an incredible treasure trove of written and visual materials: the *Periodical Accounts*,¹ diaries, station reports, ecclesiastical musings, shipping inventories, letters, store accounts and photography, which – coupled with the duration of these records (now for over 200 years) – provide an extraordinary picture of the social dynamics, subsistence strategies and nature of Inuit participation and involvement with the Moravians, thus providing a very rich perception of the past, biased as it is by the structure of Moravian beliefs and practices.

Throughout the Moravian tenure in Labrador there was a persistent controversy over the problem of combining the Moravians' primary evangelical objectives with their very lucrative entrepreneurial and trade initiatives. The

Fig.1. Labrador with mission stations and dates.



Moravians strove forcefully to present this trade as a necessary inconvenience tangential to their primary purpose of saving souls. In order to proselytise for Christ, the Moravians had first to attract and then anchor the nomadic Inuit to the

Christian communities they desired to create in the wilderness. This they were only able to do by acquiescing to the demands of the Inuit to provide them with European manufactured products, food items and raw materials. As the

Christian communities grew and became more linked to a global world economy, the Moravians sought to justify their mercantile interests to their European supporters by elaborating on their need to continue the struggle against the heathen elements in Inuit society. In so doing, the Moravians 'constructed' a dichotomy between the orderly hard-working 'Christian Inuit' of the mission villages and the 'Heathens' – the feral, wandering hunters of the north. With the advent of photography the Moravians were provided with a new means to present themselves and their work to Christian charities and philanthropists in Great Britain and Europe.

The Moravian Church

The United Brethren, or Moravians, are a Protestant missionary sect that originated in central Europe during the late fifteenth century. In 1722 a number of Moravians congregated about the estate of Count Zinzendorf at Herrnhut near the German-Polish border, and formed the nucleus of the modern Church. Communal life at Herrnhut emphasised diligence, work, orderliness, punctuality and frugality. It became the social model to which the Moravians believed all human societies should aspire. The certainty of their moral and spiritual belief sustained them in their confrontations with indigenous and non-Western peoples throughout the non-Christian world. The Moravians were one of the first Protestant Churches to promote a foreign mission enterprise beginning in the West Indies in 1732, and expanding thereafter to maroon communities in Nicaragua and Dutch Guiana, to Greenland, Labrador, eastern North America, India, Tibet, South Africa and Alaska.

Moravians in Labrador

LESSONS IN POWER AND AUTHORITY

The Moravians' zeal, which sustained them in the wilderness of Labrador, was founded in their belief in their ability, with God's help, to transform the barrenness and anarchy of the heathen's country into a land of Christian piety and order. The Inuit proved to be formidable adversaries. Through tact, diplomacy, intrigue and aggression the Inuit had in the two centuries prior to 1750 gained considerable experience in dealing with Europeans, and had acquired a strong desire for European manufactured products and raw materials. During this early contact period in Labrador, historical records and archaeology point to the emergence of a group of powerful native leaders who were able to consolidate their authority along two lines of control: one eco-

nomie, as 'trading captains' or 'big men', powerful family heads who controlled access to European products; and the other religious, in the form of the powerful shaman-sorcerers, or *angakkuk*, who interceded with the powers of the spirit world. Often, prominent Inuit 'leaders' would be both. It is exactly along these lines, access to trade goods and as an intermediary between humans and the spiritual world, that the Moravian agenda in Labrador would have coincided with traditional trends of authority.

Prior to the arrival of the Moravians there existed a state of internecine raiding, murder and anarchy along the southern Labrador coast where European and Inuit cultures collided. This situation precluded the expansion of British interests in their North Atlantic fishery. The Governor of Newfoundland, Sir Hugh Palliser, acting with the belief that the missionaries' influence might prove the means to pacify the Inuit, was instrumental in arranging for a royal land-grant and trading concession in northern Labrador in 1769.

The Moravians established their first Labrador mission at Nain in 1771 and from that time forward the Moravian and Inuit identities have been closely entwined. Except for the annual voyage of their supply vessel, the *Harmony*, and the chance visit from fishermen and explorers, the Moravians were completely cut off from their European homeland. No one can doubt the power of the faith that sustained them in their self-imposed exile.

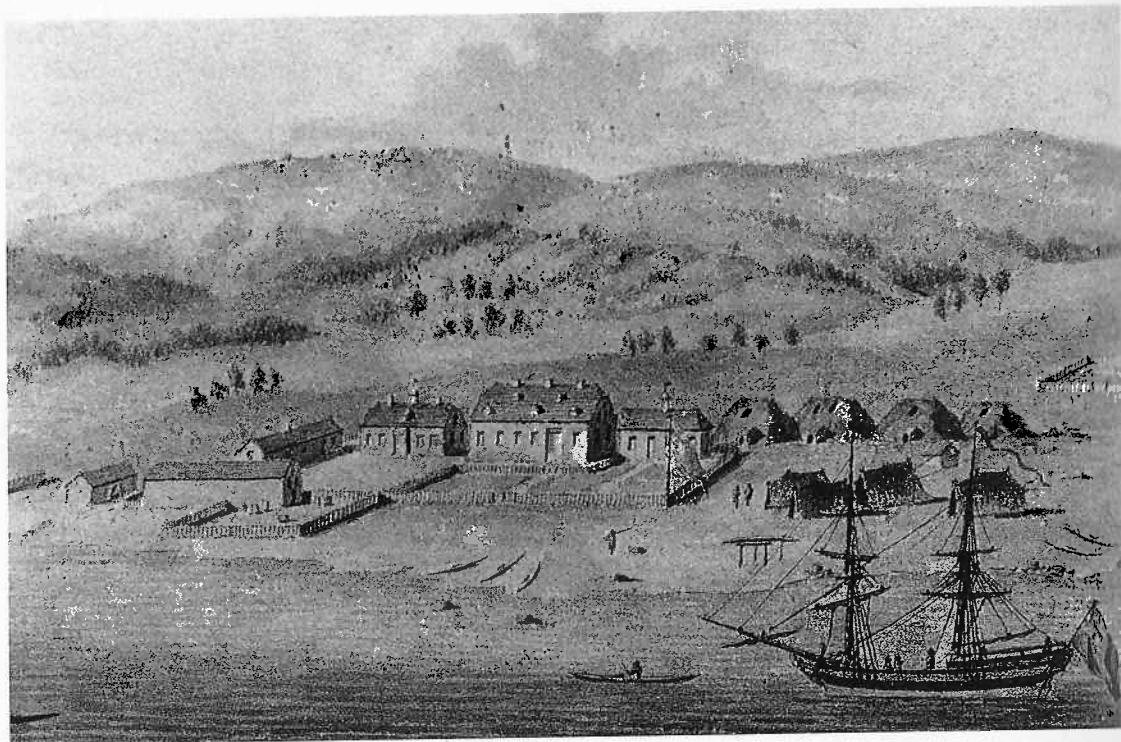
The early years of the Labrador mission were fraught with tension as the memory of native treachery remained:

All accounts agreed in representing them as heathen of the worst stamp, treacherous, cruel and bloodthirsty in their dealings, with scarcely a trace of religion of any kind, enslaved by the darkest superstition, and entirely ruled by the powerful influences of their sorcerers. (PA28:1, 1871)

In the Labrador of the Moravians the wild barren land was a mute testament to the wilderness of men's souls. In order to win conscripts for Christ, the Moravians had to challenge the authority of the traditional leaders. While the battle for souls may have taken place on a spiritual plane, the battlefield resided on earth, and had much to do with access to resources. Throughout the nineteenth century, as the Inuit become more desirous and more dependent on European supplies and more acquiescent to the advantages of seasonal residence at the mission village, there is a transition from the nomadic, independent life that characterised traditional Inuit society to one that coincided with the Moravian precepts of a Christian community.

RIGHT
Fig.2. Nain,
Labrador, c.1790.

BELOW
Fig.3. Nain,
Labrador, c.1880.



THE GROWTH OF CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

The architecture and landscaping of the mission stations was a powerful demonstration of Christian confrontation with the forces of chaos in the wild lands that surrounded them; mission stations imposed order on the wilderness. This physical transformation was a bulwark against the despair at the slow progress of Christianity among the Inuit; it was also a very tangible testimony to the existence, promise and potential of the mission. That these Moravian views sometimes clashed with those of the Inuit is no surprise: 'At first [they were] opposed to our idea of building the huts in a straight line, they eventually acquiesced in our wish and were finally quite pleased with the appearance of the row of . . . houses, covered with sod.' (PA26:365-6, 1866.)

Moravian Archives have extensive visual materials documenting the growth of the Christian communities in Labrador: originally (in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries) drawings, maps and plats (fig.2), and later on photographs (fig.3). Interestingly, there are very few drawings or representations of the Inuit in the early Moravian documents. With photography it becomes possible to testify to the success of mission activities by bringing the faces of the Inuit attached to the mission villages to the Moravian authorities and supporters in Europe.

The mission at Nain had not been established long before the Moravians realised that the varied resources on which the Inuit depended necessitated a high degree of mobility. However, not only did a wandering, rootless existence threaten



LEFT
 Fig.4. 'A good catch of seals', vicinity of Hebron, prior 1900. Photograph by Br. Townley. A missionary stands in his spotless woollen 'dickey' while beside him a group of Inuit men (dirty and wet) pause in their work to be photographed. Two women (left) ignore the camera. Photograph purchased by E. B. Delabarre, summer 1900.

BELOW
 Fig.5. Working in the blubber yard, Hebron, c.1900.



the pastoral idyll that the Moravians envisioned for their 'flock', but 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 with the opening of additional mission stations. This expansion had several objectives: (1) it sought to extend the missionary influence to areas which the Inuit had recourse to move to; (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 'civilised' or 'Christian Inuit' from their heathen, barbarous relatives in the north.

By 1824 Nain and Hopedale were Christian communities. Part of the Moravian strategy of

control was to encourage the Inuit to maintain a relative degree of sedentariness, to keep them apart from the disruptive influences of their northern relatives. The Moravians thus encouraged changes in Inuit subsistence activities.

Around 1800 they introduced the use of nets for catching seals (Brice-Bennet 1981). Strung across narrow inner island passages, large numbers of migrating harp seals could be captured. While Moravian accounts presented this 'industry' as a means to assure a winter food supply for both the Inuit and their dogs, the excess blubber, rendered into oil, was a principal component of the Moravian trading economy (figs 4 and 5). The Moravians also encouraged the Inuit to adopt a summer cod fishery. Surplus dried cod was traded with the mission. Trade, primarily in

dried fish and seal oil, but to some degree including furs and handicrafts, was critical to the economic well-being of the mission.

THE MISSION ECONOMY

From their inception the Moravian missions in Labrador were set up to cater to both the spiritual and material needs of the Inuit. The Moravians had a trading monopoly along the Labrador coast but sought to deflect the criticism this invoked by trying to separate two spheres of activity in Labrador. Trade was placed under the control of the 'Brethren Society for the Furtherance of the Gospel Among the Heathen' in London, which oversaw the financial management of the Labrador Mission. But this responsibility was a dilemma and set in place a source of conflict that was never resolved (Williamson 1964). The Moravians were frustrated by the Inuit resistance to frugality and to storing (away) food and resources against a future period of want, as well as their resistance to sustained employment. The Inuit, on the other hand, never divorced the store from the mission, so they were astonished at the meanness and the hypocrisy of the mission traders during times of starvation and the unsympathetic attitude towards debt accumulation which flew in the face of both the Moravians' Christian tenets and intrinsic Inuit custom.

There was however, as usual, great liberality on the part of those who had been successful; they willingly divided the spoil with their less-favoured countrymen. It is an old custom, which, like several others somewhat similar in character, is kept up and watched over with jealous care, to divide all the animals captured among the natives who frequent the same hunting-ground. (PA25:310, Nain 1864)

The mission's trading agenda was controversial not only in Labrador but in Europe as well.

Our only aim in carrying on this trade is, however, to benefit the poor Eskimoes, and raise funds for carrying on the missionary work to the glory of God: the trade forms a sort of outward bond of union between us and the natives, which is valuable, especially as long as God's Spirit has not wrought a spiritual union. (PA:16, Nachvak 1868)

The expense of running the Labrador missions was offset both by Christian philanthropy, principally through the London Society for the Furtherance of the Gospel, and by the 'Labrador trade' which depended on Inuit labour. Products from Labrador included a fine grade of oil, baleen (in the eighteenth century), furs, fish and handicrafts. The seal fishery was of paramount importance for both the Inuit and the Moravians, as

the meat fed people and dogs, the skins were used in traditional clothing, and the blubber was made into oil for export. The late autumn/early winter migration of harp seals could be extraordinarily productive,² and by 1870 enough cod and salmon were being caught and dried to warrant a separate ship being sent 'down north' to collect this product.

CONFLICTING WORLD VIEWS

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: 3030). 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.

A missionary stationed at Ramah in 1872 described the Inuit perception that linked the spiritual and pragmatic:

I have had occasion often to observe, during the winter, that these heathen Eskimoes fancy that by becoming Christians they would be better off in temporal matters, and more successful in their struggle for maintenance. Many a time I told them that our Saviour had promised to remember the temporal wants of His people, for He only entertained thoughts of love and benevolence towards them; but that His chief desire was, that their souls might be saved for the life to come; that our Saviour well knew what was good and beneficial for us, and that if we had all our hearts could wish in worldly things, we should probably often forget Him, and be content if our souls perish with hunger. (PA28:354, 1871)

Throughout the nineteenth century the Moravians persisted in presenting the Inuit of Labrador as essentially two discrete populations, the Christian Inuit settled in their vicinity, and the heathens – the Northlanders – from northern Labrador and Kangivia (Ungava) who lived in their isolated camps scattered along the coast.

Inuit identity: Christian and heathen

The construct of the 'Christian Inuit' that emerges from the pages of the *Periodical Accounts* incorporates a number of attributes: the Christian Inuit were devout (fig.6), clean, hard-working and industrious. Attached to one of the mission stations, they dressed in clothing made from cloth and wool (fig.7), and lived in their own single-family homes, with glass windows and stoves:

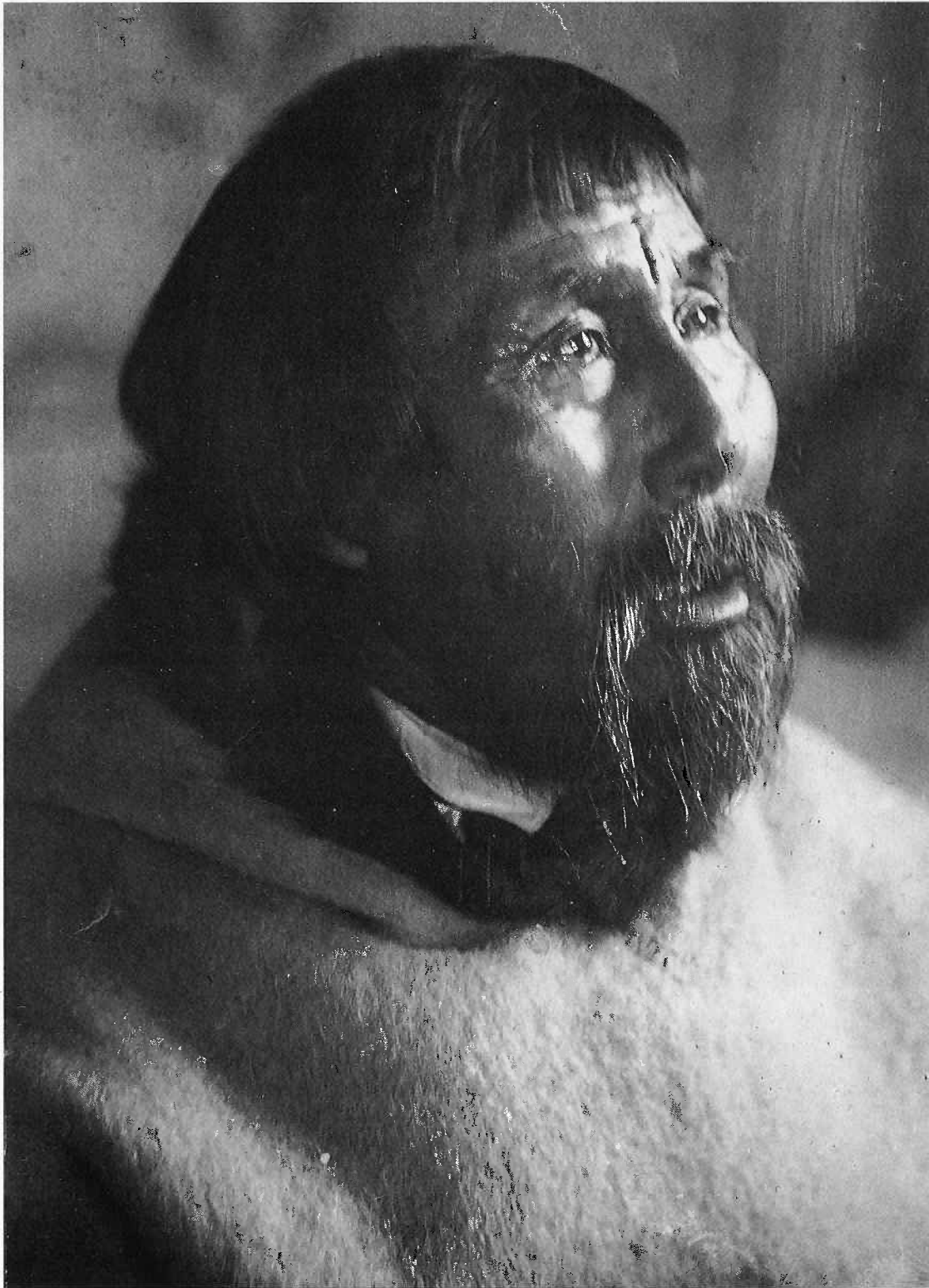


Fig.6. Herman Koch photograph of pious Inuit man, *carte-de-visite*, c.1895.

The walls are papered with bright colours and adorned with pictures, and each house has its clock, mirror, and petroleum-lamp. Few chairs are to be seen, as boxes can be used for this purpose or the table. The clothing, too, has become European. (PA30:146-7, 1876)

They were provident:

Under the influence of Christian teaching some

improvement has taken place, and there are not a few who, by careful economy, have become owners of good boats, and log-houses with pictures and looking glasses on the walls, and iron stoves to warm them. (PA28:63, 1871)

They were exposed to the refinements of civilised society – school and church – and musically adept. Fond of liturgical music, hymns and chorales, they formed choirs, string quartets and



Fig.7. 'Old Ruth in her best dress.' Okak, c.1905. From, *Among the Eskimos of Labrador*, Samuel King Hutton (1912).

OPPOSITE ABOVE
Fig.8. A heathen Inuit man and his two wives, from Ungava, visiting a mission station in northern Labrador, c.1880.

brass bands that played 'in a very creditable manner' (PA30:148, 1877). Their dead were buried in churchyards.

On the other hand, there were the 'Heathen Eskimos' whose annual winter visits to the mission stations are a re-occurring lament in the pages of the *Periodical Accounts*. 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 Moravians 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:

A company of heathen, from Nachvak, with their sorcerer, arrived here in a boat, for the purpose of

traffic . . . when one of the heathen, dissatisfied with the price offered for a seal-skin full of holes, and disappointed at not obtaining a present for himself and his company, became angry, and seizing Br. Ribbach's hand, exclaimed in a threatening tone, 'Now, you are in my power! Will you give me a present or not?' . . . this is another proof how mistaken is the notion of those, who think that the Esquimaux are naturally a harmless and good-natured race. They are as savage as they were ninety years ago, unless they are converted by the power of God, or restrained by fear, or by the desire to be richly rewarded for their submissive conduct; and hence we have no hesitation to declare our firm belief, that the Esquimaux residing from Saeglek to the North of the Ungava Bay, if tempted by their natural covetousness, and disappointed in their expectations, are quite capable of murdering an European for the sake of a trifle. (PA24:546, 1862)

The heathen were idolatrous, they wore amulets and were subject to the power of the *angakkuk*. Dirty and unkempt, the women carried their infant children naked in their hoods (PA23:86 1858). They were nomadic:

You must continue to bear in mind, that the roving habits of the Esquimaux retard their progress in civilization, and even those who have become obedient to the faith, must necessarily retain the manners and customs received from their fathers, in as these are fixed by the nature of the country.' (PA24: 468, Nain 1863)

They were lazy and improvident in that they refused to put aside food against future contingencies.³ They wore the skins of animals, ate uncooked food, were polygamous (fig.8), lived in sod- and earth-covered semi-subterranean huts (fig.9) heated by seal-oil lamps and stoves. Their dead were buried under rocks on the hillside.

This dichotomy between the pacified Christian and the wild nomadic heathen pervades the Moravian documentation including the photographic record. And while the *Periodical Accounts* present these two groups as distinct and separate entities, a careful reading suggests that by the latter half of the nineteenth century we are dealing with more or less a single population, a portion of which changes their identity as they alternate between residence at one of the mission stations and prolonged encampments in the country beyond mission influence. There were many reasons for Inuit families to sever periodically their ties with a particular community. People would leave for opportunities at better hunting,⁴ to live with relatives and to escape from the tensions of the community. Certain infractions of village morals, primarily related to sexual impropriety

and/or drinking, could incur the wrath of the Moravians and lead to temporary expulsion, and an instant shuffle in the rolls of Christian and heathen head-counts.

Through the *Periodical Accounts*, and other related publications, the work of the Moravians was made known to a wider audience. The profitability of the Labrador mission was predicated on both the revenue generated by the trading enterprise and by the munificence of benefactors. In order to continue to garner such support the Moravians needed the heathens as a cause to rally around. As late as 1898 a mission plea specifically recognises the heathen cause: 'It will require £300 a year . . . to provide this clergyman . . . for the heathen Esquimaux. Out of the fabulous wealth of England can it not be found?' (Pilot 1898:45.) The Moravians could not accept a world inhabited by northern spirits subordinate to the power of the shamans, and they struggled to bring salvation and Christianity to Labrador. Yet the mission documents continue to propagate and foster the notion of two discrete Inuit identities long after most 'heathen' elements had been abandoned.

Moravian photography in Labrador

The earliest extant photographs from Labrador are not Moravian, they appear to be those taken by Mr P. C. Duchochis for the us Eclipse Expedition to North Aulatsivik Island during the

summer of 1860. In addition to a series of the eclipse (alas clouds interfered at the critical moment), there are a number of scenes of expedition members at their observatory and camp in the Torngat Mountains. Duchochis took additional photographs of the Inuit whom the expedition met near Nain and at Domino in southern Labrador but these have not been located.

Notions of the sublime and the beautiful inherent in the grand scenery of the Labrador coast had two of America's foremost landscape painters of the Luminist school converge on Labrador:

BOTTOM
Fig.9. 'Old Tuglavi's Iglo', Killinek Island 1908. 'Tuglavi is a famous old heathen chief, now in his second childhood, and this is his house. It is a gloomy little hut of turf and stones, floored with trampled mud.' From *Among the Eskimos of Labrador*, Samuel King Hutton (1912).



Frederic Church in 1859 (Noble 1862), and William Bradford, who made his first voyage to Labrador in 1861 (Packard 1885).⁵ The Bradford expedition of 1864 employed a photographer, William Pierce, who arranged for a group of Inuit to pose for him in Hopedale. Other early photographers in Labrador include H. N. Robinson, who produced a series of forty-six stereoviews 'Labrador Life and Scenery' in 1876 (Darrah 1971:147; Vernon Doucette, personal communication), and Lucien M. Turner, a naturalist and ethnographer from the Smithsonian, who photographed both the Inuit and the Innu of northern Quebec and Labrador during his stay at Fort Chimo (Kuujuak) between 1882 and 1884. I am unaware of other pioneering photographers working in Labrador, but given the interest in the region, inspired both by the work of the Luminist painters and by the Arctic explorations of Elisha Kent Kane, Isaac Israel Hayes and Charles Francis Hall, some are likely to exist.

The most expansive collection of historic photography pertaining to the Inuit of Labrador is situated at the Archiv der Brüder Unität in Herrnhut, Germany, which houses a collection of approximately a thousand photographs from Labrador c.1870-1935. There are to my knowledge no early photographs (daguerreotypes or calotypes) at Herrnhut; the earliest images appear to date from around 1870.

In the back of the *Periodical Accounts* for 1875 (vol.29) there is an advertisement for 'Labrador Views, photographed from Nature' by H. Linklater, the captain of the Moravians' supply vessel the *Harmony*. Also on sale (for the benefit of the mission) were photographs of a 'Group of Native Men', and a 'Group of Native Women on board the *Harmony*', as well as photographs of the plucky mission ship itself.

In the *Periodical Accounts* there are occasional references to Moravian photographers, which coupled with some contextual evidence in the photographs themselves, provides insight into where and when and by whom the photographs were made. While the earliest photographer appears to be Linklater, his opportunity to photograph was limited by the short time he had available while the *Harmony* made its hurried round to mission stations during the short summer voyage. The first conscientious Moravian photographer appears to be Brother Hermann T. Jannasch who began taking photographs in Nain sometime around 1880. He carried his camera with him on a winter sledge journey to Hopedale in 1887-8. He is described as 'the photographer among our Labrador missionaries, and we have to thank him for some excellent pictures of per-

sons and places in that cold land' (LaTrobe 1888-9). Jannasch's pictures were very popular, being sold by the Moravians at their London office as prints, stereoviews and cartes-de-visite. Jannasch's *oeuvre* was clearly substantial and it is likely that much of the Herrnhut collection from Nain in the nineteenth century is his work.

Other Moravian photographers are identified with other missions: (1) Samuel King Hutton, missionary and doctor, served in Okak from 1902 to about 1910 and produced an extensive corpus of photographs that appear widely in Moravian publications (including his own book: Hutton 1912) at the turn of the century; (2) a Mr Bohlmann, stationed at Hebron in 1906, is responsible for an interesting series of photographs (approximately 105), detailing, among other subjects, Inuit house construction and wage labourers at the station; (3) the southern region of missionary activity, at Makkovik, is documented by Walter W. Perrett who photographed the erection of the church there in 1896-7, as well as informal aspects of mission life (picnics and frolics in the snow); and (4) among a number of more informal pictures and snapshots taken after 1920, there is a group of approximately ninety-five pictures taken by Revd Paul Hettasch in Nain between 1926 and 1931 and a few by his son Siegfried between 1930 and 1940. These later photographs are more candid than earlier images, they tend to be informal views of people in the village (fig.10) and may in part be a response to a circular issued by church leaders in Herrnhut in 1925 requesting views of mission activities worldwide (MR489:9151). They also suggest a growing familiarity on the part of the Inuit with the presence of cameras as well as the technological advances in cameras and film that negated cumbersome equipment and formal posing.

While the Herrnhut collection has limited documentation, some prints are annotated and there are sometimes chronological clues that can be used in ordering the collection, such as the building sequence at the different mission stations (e.g. the Ramah mission, established 1871, closed 1907); the presence of boats and expeditions (e.g. Donald MacMillan and the *Bowdoin* 1927-8); and the tenure of identified missionaries (e.g. Walter Perrett arrives in Labrador in 1892).

Taken as a corpus of work the Moravian photograph collection reveals several themes. First of all, there are relatively few landscapes and hardly any natural history subjects. By and large the Moravian landscape is a cultural phenomenon. Surrounded by the unrelenting wilderness and their isolation, the Moravian photographers

looked inwardly upon themselves and their community. There are numerous photographs of the mission stations, often with the *Harmony* in the background. Nain, Okak and Hebron are well documented, Hopedale and Makkovik a little less so, Ramah and Burwell poorly. There appears to be but two photographs taken at Zoar. Missionaries and their families – often posed on the church steps – are a popular subject: solid, sober, middle class. By far and away the most common theme is the Inuit.⁶ Photographs of subsistence activities include men in kayaks and with dog-teams and sleds, men preparing to go hunting, women fishing and gathering wood, and people standing beside recently butchered animals (walrus, beluga whales, seals, bear) and at their summer fishing camps. But the largest set of photographs are of the Inuit in the communities, posed singly and in groups. The anonymity of these village pictures – few of the individuals are named – serves to epitomise the Moravian ideal of what their aspirations for the Inuit were. Within a few generations the Inuit have been brought from the darkness into the light and set firmly on the road to Christian morality and responsibility.

The formality in many of these group photographs is apparent (frontispiece). Intended for the edification of church members and a lay audience far across the sea, the photographs are for the most part conventional portraits that have been constructed for the purpose of presenting the success of the Moravian labours in making a Christian land out of the wilderness.⁷

It is harder to discern what the Inuit thought of the camera beyond its troubling capacity to intrude. There is at least one obligatory story of the camera as soul-catcher, as told by the Moravian doctor Samuel Hutton during a visit to Port Burwell in 1908:

It is not to be wondered at that superstition is strong among these Killinek folk, so lately utterly heathen, without knowledge of Christianity or of civilisation. The first glimpse I had of it was in the fear that some of them had of being photographed.

I chanced to meet a young man whose face was a perfect picture of the heathen Eskimo type, and to my delight he was willing to pose then and there for his portrait.

I got an excellent likeness of him from the front and then made ready for a side view. But he would have no more. 'Táva,' he said (that is completely finished). I tried to coax him. Would he have it done if there were other Eskimos with him? He hesitated. 'Imakka' (perhaps), he said. 'Then go and fetch that group of men to stand with you.'

Off he trotted, and I saw him palavering with the men. Presently he started back; but stopped at a fair



distance and shouted 'They cannot come: the lady has their ghosts in her box,' pointing to a lady who was wandering on the beach with a kodak, and who had apparently just photographed the group. Then he fled to his tent on the hillside! (Hutton 1912: 41-2)

There is little doubt in my mind that this narrative, presented as a quaint tale of superstition, masks a disturbing tendency of camera-wielding *gallunaat*, outsiders and visitors for the most part, to act as if their camera was a licence to violate polite behaviour and personal privacy.

I do not know when people in the Labrador communities began to take photographs themselves. The Torngasok Cultural Centre in Nain and the Them Days organisation in Goose Bay/Happy Valley have both initiated projects based on archiving the images from family photograph albums. Should these become available I suspect the perception of Inuit culture would vary dramatically from that presented by the Moravians. It seems surprising that, given the alacrity with which the Labrador Inuit adopted European inventions, no Inuit appears to have attempted photography at an early date. Some sense of the historical narrative nature of photography was long apparent to the Inuit, as the Moravians had been using magic-lantern slides for religious instruction since at least 1865 (PA25: 543). During the winter of 1877-8 Inuit visiting the mission station at Ramah (established 1871) were shown magic-lantern slides which 'filled these visitors of ours with astonishment, for which they could find no words' (PA31:29). Hutton used his own photographs mixed with images from Bible stories to provide lessons in

Fig. 10. 'Kecophas & Jeremias, 4-year-old eskimo children carry water.' (Photographer: S. Hettasch, Nain, 1930)

OPPOSITE ABOVE
Fig.11. Hebron, 1901.

OPPOSITE BELOW
Fig.12. Hebron, 1990.
*'And I will scatter you
among the heathen, and
will draw out a sword
after you: and your
land shall be desolate,
and your cities waste'*
(OT. Leviticus 26:33).
(Photographer:
Stephen Loring)

morals and 'sanitary reform': 'The magic lantern was a great help in this direction: the people shouted with glee to see their own faces on the screen, and sat quietly listening while I told them some Bible story or talked of better houses and ideal home life.' (Hutton 1912:317.)

Conclusions: a picture is worth a thousand words

There is a tower of rock set upon the summit of the highest hill above the abandoned station at Hebron.⁸ Here the missionaries sometimes stood gazing seaward, anxious for the first sight of the *Harmony*. Even on the fairest summer's day the landscape is stark and imposing – and melancholy: the cemetery with its fallen fence and toppling monuments, the weather-beaten facade of the mission building, the garden, walk-ways and Inuit houses all overgrown (figs 11 and 12). No one standing next to these navigation beacons and gazing over such a wild romantic scene can doubt the remarkable dedication and piety of the brethren for their work and their beliefs, nor gain some inkling of the thoughts and aspirations of those stern, sober, self-exiled missionaries.

The introspective power of historical photography is well known, as is its propensity for misrepresentation and selectivity. When the corpus of Moravian photography is considered as a whole, one is struck by the paternalism and social control the images imply, especially those where the Inuit are posed, dressed in clean clothes (often the formal Church dress: white cloth *sil-lapâks* and dickeys), stiffly and in rows: in front of their houses, in groups of Church 'helpers', in choirs and in brass bands. The Inuit are domesticated. Rarely in these photographs is there a flicker of levity or mirth. There is no denying the power of these photographs to entrance and delight us with their window into the past, especially when so much of that past has been denied its descendants. Not surprisingly, the photographs tell us as much about the photographers as they do about their subjects. As a body of work, one can't help but be struck by the ideology of domination that these images convey. There are few smiling faces, few home interiors, few camp scenes, few relaxing moments. There is little evidence to suggest that there was much Inuit consultation in the construction of this collection. It was designed to be a Moravian story. While not unexpected, it is disturbing, nevertheless, to find a Moravian photographer exhibiting the tourists' stereotypical hubris at an encounter with an exotic native, albeit one who was a much respected village elder:

I gave up trying to draw any information out of him after I had tried to take his portrait. I armed myself with a ship's biscuit, and went in search of Tuglavi. I found him near his iglo, and offered him the biscuit.

He took it with a most delighted 'Thank-you': 'Nakome-e-e-ek,' he said, 'nakomek.'
'Adsiliorlagit-ai' (let me take your photograph).
'Sua?' (what?)
'Will you let me make a likeness of you?'
'Atsuk (I don't know). May I eat the biscuit?'
'Yes, presently; just stand over here.'
'Nerrilangale' (let me eat it), and he turned his back on me.
'All right; just turn round and stand still a moment.'
'Nerrilangale, ner-ri-langa-le-e-e-e'; and the poor old man broke down into sobs and ambled off home munching his precious biscuit. (Hutton 1912: 39-40)

I don't know which is more disturbing: the callous disrespect of an eminent Inuit elder or the inherent language of racism and paternalism that is paraded in the quaintness of Hutton's remarks.

Through archaeology, oral history, and the reassessment of archival materials, the potential for a new dynamic multi-vocal 'history' of the Inuit people of Labrador is possible – a history that celebrates the extraordinary accomplishments of the ancestors through the experiences, observations and memories of both native and non-native eyes. I was struck by the comments of an Inuit elder from Keewatin whose thoughts were recorded several years ago in an issue of *Inuktitut* that dealt with cultural patrimony:

The *qallunaat* are different in this way too. Since they have recorded their history, they seem to know a lot. They can refer to books to check their history. The only thing they really believe is what has been written. I think because they know they can look things up, they depend on the written word and have shorter memories. Older Inuit have good memories of what happened years ago. Many of them can still easily recall an incident that occurred years ago. Long ago, we didn't have a system of writing or the necessary materials to record what happened in past times. Because things were not written down on paper, many people today will not believe what we tell them about our past. *The things that we talk about actually happened but they are accepted only as legends.* (Nutarakittuq 1990: 41, emphasis added.)

Much of the post-colonial critique of photography as it applies to people is framed within the context of 'taking' photographs (Brumbaugh 1996). Many museums are now redefining their commitment to native communities, by providing the means by which community members can



participate in the construction and interpretation of their past. Old photographs, the visual patrimony of the past, are a language that government and development interests can see and hear. The old photographs speak loudly: this is Inuit land, this is the land of their ancestors and their inheritance.

That the Inuit past belongs to them seems obvious, that it has – in some respects – been denied them is also apparent. The challenge and hope for the future is that archaeologists, anthropologists and historians, with their arcane skills and knowledge, learn to surrender the supremacy of their voice in order to hear the voice of the people whose life and land it is. In Labrador, as elsewhere in the Arctic, not to listen dooms the *quallunaat* to a history of the north that is as one-sided, as inherently silent and false, and as unforgiving as the black-and-white photographic legacy left us by the Moravians.

Acknowledgements

I must thank the conference organisers and volume editors Jonathan King and Henrietta Lidchi for their patience, humour and elan at bringing this all together. To every academic there falls, from time to time (too infrequently, alas), these alchemical convergences of people and ideas that are exactly right. So, obviously, I must, and do, thank my fellow conference participants for their inspiration and insight.

My knowledge of the Moravian collections must be considered superficial, limited as it is by having spent just a week at the Archiv der Brüder Unität in Herrnhut in July 1995. More intensive research is needed. In Herrnhut my work in the archives was greatly facilitated by the linguistic accomplishments and the enthusiasm of my good buddy Joan Gero, and the extraordinary generosity of the archivist Ms E. v. Ungern and her staff, whose many considerations on my behalf I very gratefully acknowledge. Stephan Augustin, the curator/director of the Völkerkundemuseum Herrnhut, and Hans Rollman at Memorial University in St John's Newfoundland have guided me further than either suspects.

Finally, I would be remiss were I not to acknowledge my deep respect for the integrity of the Moravian brethren who laboured in

Labrador. While their beliefs and behaviour and struggles are as foreign to me as those of the Inuit were to them, I am thankful for their archival legacy and I am in awe at the power of their vision.

Notes

1. The *Periodical Accounts*, published annually between 1790 and 1960 by the Society for the Furtherance of the Gospel, contained abstracted accounts of mission letters and diaries from Moravian mission work worldwide.
2. The *Periodical Accounts* for 1860 contain the following passage: 'The flesh of these animals is the chief food of the Esquimaux. From 3000 to 4000 of them are taken on an average in a year at our four stations. It is affirmed, that the number of those caught along the whole coast, partly in nets, partly in kayaks, exceeds a million. Their number is said to be now decreasing, in consequence of which, more attention is paid than formerly to fishing. Cod, salmon and trout are the principal fish.' (PA24:275-6, 1862)
3. 'The rule is, to part with their fish and blubber and furs to any trader, who can supply them with various European articles of food, without bestowing a thought on the possible exigencies of a failure of their native food supplies in the long winter. This childish thoughtlessness is a source of great concern to the missionaries, and introduces much unpleasantness and difficulty in business transactions.' (PA28:63, 1871)
4. The Inuit hunter 'is unhappy, and feels unjustly treated, if any obstacle is placed in the way of his return to his natural pursuits. An equivalent in money or goods for the proceeds of the hunt, would not be a substitute to him for the loss of his favourite employment.' (PA25:92, Hebron 1863)
5. William Bradford led seven summer cruises to Labrador and Greenland between 1861 and 1869. On his most ambitious trip, to Greenland in 1869, Bradford was accompanied by Mr Dunmore and Mr Critcherson, two photographers from Boston, whose work, along with the earlier photographs by Pierce from Labrador, appear in Bradford's *The Arctic Regions* (1875). For more on Bradford see Condon (1989), and Wamsley and Barr (1996).
6. There were only ten images of the Innu (the Montagnais-Naskapi) in the Moravian Archive collection at Herrnhut.
7. In 1895 photographs of mission work begin to appear regularly in the *Periodical Accounts*, whose editors mined the Herrnhut archives for visual material from the worldwide arena of Moravian missionary activity.
8. The dwindling population and the expense of keeping open this northernmost station caused its abandonment in 1959 and the relocation of the Inuit population south to Nain.

Edited by J.C.H. King
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(1998)

Published for the Trustees of the British Museum by British Museum Press