

ELIK AND OTHER STORIES OF THE MACKENZIE ESKIMOS. BY HERBERT T. SCHWARZ. *Toronto/Montreal: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1970. 9½ x 8¼ inches, 79 pages, \$7.95.*

The Eskimos of the Mackenzie Delta share a heritage rich in legends and traditions. Herbert Schwarz, a doctor stationed on the Dewline, has travelled extensively in the area and has listened to the people tell their stories. These, he has collected in the book *Elik and other stories of the MacKenzie Eskimos*. He is very conscious of the strong tradition of storytelling among these people and is also aware that it is dying out with the old people. In retelling a tale about the origin of the Mackenzie people, that closely resembles the story of Noah's Ark in the Bible, Dr. Schwarz emphasizes the importance of recording the legends before the storytellers are all gone. The nine stories record, with a fair degree of accuracy, the customs and beliefs of the Eskimos before the white man came to the Mackenzie land.

Most of the stories mention the magic powers of the shaman which are solicited by the Eskimos to help them during times of difficulty or danger. In the story "Elik", the woman, Maneq, is barren and goes to the shaman for advice. He sends her on a journey to find three stones that were once a woman and her child and a dog. He instructs her to bring back some scrapings of the stone which was the little boy. When she returns he performs a magic ceremony over her that in effect transfers the soul of the dead boy to her, so that she can have a child of her own. A further illustration of the shaman's powers and the importance of respecting taboos is the story "Akaluk and the Stolen Spirit of Uggik". Uggik has broken the taboo of cooking and eating seal and caribou meat in the same pot. The old woman of the sea, Nulijajuk, has punished him by stealing his soul and hiding it at the bottom of the sea. His son, Akaluk, calls the wise old shaman who lends him some helping spirits to go in search of the stolen soul. These spirits help him to surmount the danger of a polar bear and make a journey to the bottom of the sea where he regains his father's soul.

Of special interest also is the selection "The Great Eskimo Rally at Fort McPherson" which describes a meeting between the Eskimos and the Loucheux Indians. Contacts between Indians and Eskimos were rare and this account provides an insight into an aspect of Eskimo life that is not generally known: the rivalry that existed between Indians and Eskimos in the Mackenzie region.

The activities related to the hunt figure prominently in several of the stories. The preparations of the Mackenzie Eskimos for the whale hunt are described in "The Whale Hunt". Before the hunt the men lived in the Assembly House where they prepared their harpoons and spears and also engaged in tests of strength. Meanwhile the women lived apart, repairing the boats and sewing new clothes for the men. The work involved in the caribou hunt is described in another story:

"Great numbers of caribou were slaughtered and the women followed their menfolk skinning, quartering, and cutting the meat into long thin strips and then drying it in the sun or in small smoke houses. Hides and furs were put away and seals and whales were dried on large platforms. Their blubber was rendered into fat and stored in sealskin bags." p. 30.

Such factual passages recur frequently in the book and inform the reader of the life once led by the people of the North.

Throughout the book, Herbert Schwarz uses Eskimo words when referring to specifically Eskimo things. Footnotes give concise explanations of these words which lend so much special colour to the stories. Since he defines a number of Eskimo words so precisely it is rather strange that he should use the word "medicine man" instead of "shaman". A generally accepted distinction is made between the two. The medicine man is a healer among people of planting cultures who uses suggestion on his patients without going into a trance. The shaman on the other hand, is the central figure in hunting groups, such as Eskimos, and works only in a state of trance. The description of Qilag becoming rigid, frothing at the mouth and uttering strange grunts and cries approaches more closely the definition of a shaman than of a medicine man.

Although the Eskimo stories told by Herbert Schwarz, an Englishman, are most interesting and informative — they lack the feeling of urgency that they might have if they were told by an Eskimo storyteller. The "Harpoon of the Hunter" written by Markoosie of Resolute Bay serves as a valuable comparison. Markoosie, born into the Eskimo tradition of storytelling, uses a more colourful language to depict events that were once so familiar to his people. Despite certain inaccuracies of detail, the action comes alive and immediate. The threat posed by a polar bear or the importance of getting a seal to keep from starving are intense feelings that are part of the Eskimo culture which Markoosie knows first-hand and can

relive in his story. Being of a different culture, Herbert Schwarz can only faithfully relate the various events and record the legends for posterity.

The second part of the book is a series of biographical notes, with photographs, about the Mackenzie region storytellers Herbert Schwarz has met. The author tries to make the sketches sound conversational and personal but instead they sound self-conscious. Although these are all people whom he considers to be his friends, he seems uncomfortable when writing about them.

It is unfortunate that Dr. Schwarz does not explain more fully in his notes how he came to collect these stories, nor acknowledge more fully who told him a particular story. In the biographical notes he does mention that Susie Tiktalik of Sachs Harbour told him about "The Raven and the Whale" and that "Elik, the Far Seeing One" was pieced together from fragments told to him by Kenneth Peelookook. One wonders who told him the other stories or whether he heard several versions of each from different people, and then pieced them together to form the version in the book. When reading such a collection of tales, made in order to preserve them or present them to another culture, it would be of value for the reader to know whether or not it is a verbatim translation [or a piece that is composed of several versions of the same story].

The stories collected in *Elik and other stories of the MacKenzie Eskimos* are both enjoyable and indicative of the traditional Eskimo way of life. Simple line drawings by Mona Ohoveluk illustrate most vividly the principal subject of each story. For those who wish to acquaint themselves with Eskimo legends and customs this book is a valuable record and one which is well worth reading.

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THE GREAT ALASKA EARTHQUAKE OF 1964: HUMAN ECOLOGY. COMMITTEE ON THE ALASKA EARTHQUAKE OF THE DIVISION OF EARTH SCIENCES, NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL. Washington, D.C.: National Academy of Sciences, 1970. 9 x 11¼ inches, 510 pages, illustrated, tables and maps. \$29.50.

Soon after the Alaska earthquake of 27 March 1964, President Johnson wrote Special Assistant for Science and Technology, Donald F. Hornig, requesting that his office

"undertake to assemble a comprehensive scientific and technical account of the Alaskan earthquake and its effects . . ." Assistance from the National Academy of Sciences was solicited and a Committee on the Alaska Earthquake was formed. The resulting reports, prepared by the Committee and its seven specialized panels, constitute one of the most comprehensive accounts of a national disaster ever compiled. Seven separate documents dealing with geology, seismology and geodesy, hydrology, biology, oceanography and coastal engineering, engineering, and human ecology have been prepared. An eighth volume will include a summary and recommendations prepared by the entire Committee.

The report on human ecology was prepared by the Panel on Geography which included social scientists from several fields. Its papers describe the effects of the earthquake on people and the varied ways in which they attempted to cope with and modify these effects. Although human response to the Alaska earthquake was found not to differ markedly from that of peoples elsewhere to sudden disasters, this volume is unique in being the first detailed study of human behaviour during and after an earthquake.

Following a general introduction, the volume contains 20 papers by 17 authors, 12 appendixes and an extensive annotated bibliography. The papers are grouped into four sections: 1) Implications of the Earthquake Experience; 2) Selected Studies of Impacts and Behavior; 3) Public Administration Aspects; 4) The Human Response in Selected Communities.

Papers in the first section reflect the fact that in spite of the almost total lack of preparation for an anticipated earthquake, the damage and loss of life in Alaska was remarkably small. Also, contrary to what some expected at the time, the earthquake appears to have had no lasting effects, either beneficial or detrimental, on Alaska's long range economic future. Nevertheless, because of its scope and recency, the disaster revealed many problems likely to confront a community after a large-scale natural catastrophe, emphasizing the need for advance planning.

Perhaps the most interesting paper in the second section was prepared by an economist, George Rogers. He considers the economic effects of the earthquake in some detail noting that although recovery was rapid and the impact of recovery spending beneficial, some communities benefited at the expense of others. Anchorage, as the largest centre of government and construction in the State