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ESKIMO LEARN TO RUN THEIR OWN AFFAIRS

SIMONIE, OCCUPYING HIS CHAIRMAN'S PLACE at the head of the table in the poster-pinned schoolroom, smiled apologetically to the government social worker alongside him. "They are still on the clean-up", he explained, speaking fairly good English. "One more thing." He was interpreting what the other Eskimo had said. "Lots of people are in Ikhaluit in the winter. In the spring they go out and leave all the mess. That means lots of work for the people of Ikhaluit. If something could be done. They are trying to think about how people could help clean it up. People of Ikhaluit have to clean it, because people leave it when clean-up time comes around. Can something be done about this?"

The other six Eskimo around the table, including the three women sitting together, watched attentively as the youthful chairman spoke. They were all older than Simonie and, unlike him, they could speak no English. They waited for him to interpret what the social worker was saying. The men, familiar with English from hearing it in the shops where they worked with Canadians of European extraction, could catch a few words, ". . . more plastic bags . . . cost twenty cents a bag . . . co-op could buy them. . . ." Then a telephone rang somewhere in the quiet schoolhouse. The call was for Simonie. He returned after taking it and explained that he had the key to the community hall where the weekly bingo game was due to begin at 8:30, that is in thirty minutes. Somehow he must get the key over to the other side of town, perhaps on the bus scheduled to leave at eight o'clock from just up the block. Writing in Eskimo syllabics, he scribbled a note to the bus driver while the councillors lit cigarettes and stared through the open windows into the bright June evening sunlight. For this was the Arctic, the southern coast of Baffin Island, where eighty years before a man who placed his stamp on American anthropology, Franz Boas, had found ". . . a kind of chief in the settlement, whose acknowledged authority is . . . virtually limited to the right of deciding

on the proper time to shift the huts from one place to the other, but the families are not obliged to follow him. . . . Every family is allowed to settle wherever it likes. There is no way of enforcing . . . unwritten laws and no punishment for transgressors except the blood vengeance."

The group was the elected, unpaid Community Council of Frobisher Bay, a town housing about nine hundred Eskimo together with seven hundred Euro-Canadians and built around such government-operated enterprises as an airport large enough for jetliners, a soon-to-be closed United States Air Force base, a hospital, schools, and a regional administrative headquarters with garages and shops. Eskimo predominated in the Council, especially since the two Euro-Canadian representatives had not shown up. Five Eskimo councillors also had not appeared; two were on vacation from their jobs and had gone hunting with their families; another was away learning to become an Anglican catechist, and two others were reportedly "too busy" to attend. Absenteeism troubled the chairman. Before the session ended he asked rhetorically what good it was to hold monthly meetings which less than half the group attended. "Other people were elected, therefore they should work."

The social worker had let the councillors into the schoolhouse, after which the men had drawn together several tables to make a single long one, brought additional chairs from other rooms, and found enough ashtrays to serve their needs. The first subject to take up was the clean-up campaign launched every spring. This year it had the added function of readying the town for an impending visit by the Minister of the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources, the department charged with far northern administration and Eskimo affairs. The Council worried the subject. The clean-up this year had not gone expeditiously, especially not in the populous shoreline neighborhood of Ikhaluit, "the place of fishes" also known as "the village", to which three of the councillors present belonged. A woman representative from Ikhaluit spoke bitterly of the government truck that never came through to pick up and remove raked-up refuse. Garbage strewn along the beach, she maintained, could easily be pushed into the bay at high tide if only a bulldozer came. The social worker remarked that the Council might wish to write their grievance to the regional administrator so that next time those things would not recur. A unanimous vote indicated they indeed favoured such a letter, which the chairman and social worker would draft. But then the councillors remembered the shortage of promised clean-up tools. "They only sent nine rakes; there should have been twelve", Simonie simultaneously explained and translated. "Instead of six shovels, they only sent four. They

had not much to work with. They want to know if something could be done tomorrow to push the stuff into the water." The social worker dutifully tried to phone the chief engineer to ask if required facilities could be made available next day. He returned unsuccessful and sought to divert the group's attention. "There are two more things you might want to talk about", he reminded Simonie. "Electricity [for Ikhaluit homes] and elections [for the Community Council]." Simonie relayed this to the other councillors. It was then that he informed the social worker: "They are still on the clean-up."

People who expect modernization in underdeveloped lands to be slow must be astonished at the rapidity with which leadership has emerged among a people who less than a generation ago lived as hunters and trappers and secured a considerable proportion of their food from land and sea. Not that the Eskimo who came to Frobisher Bay, mostly from small southern Baffin Island communities but also from other parts of the Canadian Arctic, were wholly isolated or primitive. They had long been Christians; they used guns, steel traps, steel harpoon points, as well as other hardware sold by the Hudson's Bay Company stores, and depended substantially on flour, tea, and sugar. Police and government officers had regularly visited their areas to adjudicate disputes, apprehend offenders, and treat illness. Although the town began in 1942, most of the Eskimo arrived between 1955 and 1960, when a boom in DEW-line construction created plenty of jobs. From 258 Eskimo in 1956 the town grew to 624 in 1958 and 906 in 1963. Opportunities for leadership, lacking in smaller Arctic communities, appeared with the growing Eskimo population, and administrators several times tried to create quasi-self-governing bodies, of which the Community Council provides a current example.

In any community everybody has some power, if only the informal ability to convince by logical reasoning or use of shame. In Frobisher Bay dominant power and responsibility remain with Euro-Canadians, especially with officers of the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources. A previous anthropologist, Toshio Yatsushiro, who studied the town in 1958 and 1959, spoke of the Eskimo's "complete" dependence on government, a dependence embracing political and economic matters as well as health and education. His characterization would be truer if it referred to the comprehensive responsibility that is exercised by the government. Powerful as they are, D. N. A. officials—"new reformers", one anthropologist writing on another part of northern Canada called them—use their power judiciously. Often they deliberately hold back to allow the Eskimo to develop resourcefulness. Eskimo share in community-wide power and responsibility mainly through participating

in such formal groups as the Community Council, the lively Apex Hill Community Association, and the older Anglican Church Council. The visible emergence of several active Eskimo leaders is one consequence of these decision-making groups.

In its present form, the Community Council goes back to 1961, when a letter from D. N. A. headquarters in Ottawa proposed that area administrators bring together leading Eskimo in various northern communities to discuss forming "Eskimo" community councils. In Frobisher Bay, the regional administrator delegated responsibility for organizing such a body to the local social worker. Initially the social worker, Harold Zuckerman, presented the idea to four men, including Simonie. Since all but one of these men later won election to the group, he apparently consulted persons with leadership potential if not with actual power. This nucleus suggested certain other men, all of whom attended a meeting on January 10, 1962, in which each of the town's three Eskimo neighbourhoods had representatives.

Since the three neighbourhoods which constitute the dispersed community of Frobisher Bay will be mentioned several times, brief identification of each is in order. Ikhaluit, "the village", about whose clean-up difficulties we have already heard, houses some five hundred Eskimo living in about eighty households. Many of these people live in cabins built from scrap lumber and other materials scrounged from the town's rich dumps. There are, however, small one- and two-room prefabricated houses purchased from the Government or allocated to welfare cases. A number of houses contain wall-mounted telephones. Many people from the village go daily to the air base, less than a mile away, to work. Here the airdrome, private telephone company, government offices, barber shops, laundry, pool hall, Hudson's Bay shops selling mostly clothing, liquor store, small hotel and bar, and many apartments for Euro-Canadian government employees are located, as well as the school where the Council holds its meeting. Only forty-seven Eskimo in eight households live in air base apartments. Three miles from the air base, over a winding road that runs on a hill above Ikhaluit and twists past a turn-off leading to the main Hudson's Bay store, lies Apex Hill, a neighbourhood inhabited by 362 Eskimo living in about sixty households as well as several Euro-Canadian families. Some Apex residents are clients of the Rehabilitation Centre and, therefore, temporary sojourners in Frobisher Bay. When they have learned new skills suitable to their impaired physical condition which will enable them

to survive without hunting and trapping, they may be returned to the small Arctic settlements they call home. Houses in the planned community of Apex Hill are mostly larger than in Ikhaluit, especially those occupied by Eskimo government employees, who rent them at low rates. Apex contains another school, garages, and shops of plumbers, roofers, oil-range repair men, carpenters, and electricians, all of which employ Eskimo. It also accommodates the community hall, about which we will hear more.

At the meeting held in the air-base school to organize a community council, the social worker carefully explained that government would not always act on recommendations initiated by such a body because funds might not be available or because the recommendations ran counter to policy. Nevertheless all Eskimo present favoured such a council. One even pointed out that making decisions in a group would not be anything new for them because when Eskimo lived in hunting camps they frequently discussed where and when to hunt. Such an attitude overlooks substantial differences between achieving consensus in a small group comprised largely of kin, about familiar subjects capable of immediate settlement, and formally resolving complex issues requiring supporting action from other leadership groups in the larger society. The speaker, however, demonstrated the enthusiasm of the group. The men discussed how representatives from each of the three neighbourhoods should be selected and promptly disagreed about having women on the council, the social worker favouring their inclusion. To end the deadlock he suggested that the men go home and discuss the problem with their wives. Whether women prevailed over their husbands we cannot say, but three weeks later two men from the air base out-argued others and won three seats for women to represent each of the neighbourhoods. The two spokesmen maintained that women's knowledge about domestic matters would usefully complement other specialized knowledge possessed by men. Since eventually women would assume a role in public life, why not promote it now? The whole group then agreed that Apex would have five representatives on the council, Ikhaluit another five, the air base one, and Euro-Canadians would elect another two.

Each neighbourhood subsequently met to nominate its representatives and to vote by secret ballot. In order to gauge how Eskimo with little or no previous experience in voting chose councillors to represent them, relevant characteristics were tabulated of all successful candidates as well as of nominees who failed to win. The councillors range in age from 28 to 61; the pool of nominees from which the voters chose has a somewhat broader range, 19 to 68. All male nominees and councillors are family heads and almost all are

steadily employed workers, despite a preponderance of irregularly employed men. Although about one-fifth of the town's families rather consistently support themselves by hunting on both land and sea, only one hunter won election. Two more hunters had been nominated but failed to draw enough support to win. Eskimo never elected both a husband and wife to the Council, although such pairs stood for office. Apex Hill nominated not a single rehabilitant, although nearly 30 per cent of the population lives in the Rehabilitation Centre. In other words, as leaders the Eskimo choose men of responsible age and family status, whose occupations firmly involve them in town life rather than anchoring them to the land, or requiring merely a temporary sojourn in Frobisher Bay as rehabilitants. All three women councillors are permanently settled in town; they are popular or influential, besides being—like many mature Eskimo women—outspoken. Judging from evidence, the opportunity which council membership provides for individuals to emerge as community-wide leaders falls primarily to men and women who have already demonstrated responsibility or influence and who are well acquainted with town life and firmly involved in it.

Since Eskimo in Frobisher Bay are divided on the morality of drinking, some of the older people and Church Council members going so far as to favour local prohibition, it is of interest to note that five of the ten male Eskimo councillors, including the chairman, hold licenses entitling them to purchase beer and other alcoholic beverages from the territorial liquor store. Two of the women visit the hotel bar fairly regularly, though more to be with their husbands than to consume large quantities of beer. Two of the male license-holders have also been convicted for drunkenness, something that happened at least once to 95 other people during twenty-one sample months, a period when Eskimo were learning to use alcohol that had just been made legally available to them. Although Eskimo social drinking alarms some Euro-Canadians and some Eskimo, who see it spelling the people's demoralization, it did not constitute a mark of unfitness when it came to choosing councillors, men and women who, as we will see, subsequently voted to tighten drinking regulations.

The newly elected councillors at their first regular meeting chose as chairman Simonie of Apex Hill. He is one of the group's youngest members but also the only Eskimo councillor who can use English. Simonie deserves closer identification. Elected when 29 years old, with little formal education, he has for some years been one of the town's busiest leaders. In addition to his Council roles, he heads the housing "co-op" in Apex Hill, serves on the board

of directors of the Community Association (a group primarily concerned with recreation), is one of the youngest members of the Church Council, and, as one of two Eskimo civil servants in Frobisher Bay, holds the job of carpenter foreman. Government officials in Ottawa know him well and chose him for an official visit to the Queen, who received him in Buckingham Palace. Neatly attired in a dark business suit, he presides over meetings smoothly and expertly, showing little sign of effort or constraint. Long experience has made him familiar with the role. His salary allows him to indulge in a considerable range of white, middle-class culture; he owns his own automobile and a modern "co-op" home which he and his wife have furnished attractively. He is a hero to those Euro-Canadian officials who visualize the North as someday administered by Eskimo in a fashion compatible with the way it is currently administered by themselves.

Council meetings are generally preceded by a private discussion between Simonie and the social worker, who suggests issues which the chairman later relays to the body. After consulting with the chairman, the social worker—who also acts as secretary—notifies other members of the forthcoming meeting and picks up Ikhaluit representatives in his government vehicle. Meetings usually open with a prayer spoken by one of the older men.

Minutes and observations provide information about thirteen Council sessions in which members heard reports on, or discussed, such major issues as delayed paychecks; the importance of honouring hospital bills and the basis on which they are computed; plans for a consumer co-op which the housing co-op, headed by Simonie, proposed to launch; hereditary family names for Eskimo; school attendance; improvements for Ikhaluit, including what town planners in Ottawa have envisaged; additional government housing; more frequent bus service; electrification; spring clean-up; tighter control of alcohol; control of dogs; the role of the police in town; the rationale behind hunting regulations and boat registration; and control of promiscuous behaviour. The school principal, various administrative officials, and a police constable have attended Council sessions to speak to members about these and other topics.

If the more thoughtful members of the Council hold any single long-range policy firmly, it is to maximize the comfort- and security-enhancing aspects of town life while retaining continuity with traditional Eskimo culture, specifically by insuring that children will have opportunity to learn such traditional techniques as sealing, bootmaking, and igloo construction. This basic

issue arose in Council sessions only once, when the principal attended to talk about better school attendance and the ultimate value of schooling. According to the minutes, Eskimo councillors then pointed out convincingly how school education cuts into training in Eskimo crafts and skills provided by the family, especially in spring when parents going to coastal camps wish to take their children along. The current principal admitted the educational value of hunting trips, but her admission was hard won. Eskimo have lectured officials and written letters expressing their desire to preserve links with the past without, however, wholly sacrificing schooling. One councillor and Anglican catechist, who strongly supports the school, wrote to the principal: "You should know certain things about Eskimo children. When they are old enough to go hunting they must be able to go hunting all alone and bring back some meat and seal for the family. I myself can do everything that a man can do When children are not taught by their father they are unable to do anything You want my children to learn English but in a similar way I want my children to learn what I do. . . ."

Lacking financial responsibility and being powerless to pass regulations binding on the town population, the Council can do little more than recommend regulatory action to the D.N.A. regional administrator or to the Government of the Northwest Territories. Such recommendations may actually originate with the local administration. For example, in May, 1962, the regional administrator requested a special Council session to hear and discuss his views regarding heavy drinking, public drunkenness, and attendant disorder following the recent legalization of beer, whisky, and wine sales to Eskimo. He proposed that purchasers should not be able to pick up paid-for beer at the territorial liquor store until after three weeks from the time of purchase. (A similar rule already held for whisky and wine.) The hotel bar, which formerly supplied beer after the liquor store had closed, would be prohibited from making any take-home sales. The Council supported his suggestions and wrote its endorsement to the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, much to the annoyance of Euro-Canadian residents, who have ineffectively petitioned for the repeal of the regulation.

In June, 1962, Simonie called the Council's attention to "single men and women . . . going wrong and doing bad things, and single women . . . having babies." The group suggested that a curfew might be imposed, Royal Canadian Mounted Police picking up young people whom they found abroad late at night. Seemingly to justify this proposal of a legal curfew, Simonie explained that a girl without parents "won't listen to the people where she

stays". The Councillors decided that on weekdays young people ought to be home between 11 and 11:30 p.m., on Saturdays by midnight. School-age children should be in the house by 9 p.m. Notices to this effect, which Simonie would write, would be put up in buses and in the Rehabilitation Centre coffee-shop and broadcast in Eskimo over the local radio station. Finally, the Council decided to write a letter "to the bosses of white men" asking them to "talk to their men" so that the latter would cease "molesting" Eskimo girls. Simonie volunteered to draft such a communication. Legal technicalities blocked introduction of a curfew and, as far as could be judged in 1963, little had come of other attempts to control late hours. The Council may be limited, but it is not wholly powerless. Administrators will heed a strong stand taken by the group just as they will listen if an individual Eskimo protests or, what is likely to be even more effective, writes (in Eskimo) to Ottawa. Whether the Council will expand its scope, power, and responsibility depends, of course, partly on the members' growing abilities and partly on the readiness of administrators and other Euro-Canadians to surrender a greater measure of their responsibility and autonomy.

When leadership is judged by observing actual participation in leadership behaviour, it is found that councillors vary in the diligence with which they carry out their responsibilities. The minutes reveal that one man missed six out of thirteen meetings, and a bus driver, who alternates between day and evening runs, missed seven. Despite the ideal of monthly sessions, the Council failed to meet in six months. On one occasion Simonie confessed that he had forgotten about the regularly scheduled session until, too late, the social worker phoned him. Women have been quite faithful about attending, far more so than Euro-Canadian representatives. Only three councillors never missed a meeting.

Without question, D.N.A. administrators, eager to encourage and use the Council in behalf of their own responsibilities, have greatly facilitated the work of the organization. The social worker's services, use of school premises, transportation, mimeographing of minutes, and other facilities, are made generously available, the councillors scarcely being aware of the efforts they would have to shoulder if they wished independently to follow the same procedures. Other Federal agencies also co-operate with the group, notably the C.B.C.-operated radio station, which broadcasts Council announcements.

Compared with what anthropologists frequently find in traditional communities, Frobisher Bay has experienced a remarkable expansion of Eskimo leadership. This growth is quite consistent with the expansion that has af-

fected many other areas of these eastern Arctic people's lives and is entirely appropriate to the urban character of their existence. With continued encouragement and sympathetic direction, the Eskimo promise quickly to become full-fledged members of modern Canadian society, perhaps with a distinctive role to play in developing the vast Northland.

TO A YOUNG WRITER

Sara Van Alstyne Allen

Forsake the suave road.
Seek the cave by secret way
Of swimming undersea, and under welded shell
Find at last the unbelievable blue.

Cast away fruit that is sweet, stones too smooth,
The flower whose root was stronger where it grew.
Hold in unshrinking hand the flame whose core
Will burn, dispelling not smoke, only a radiation
Rippling like music over lonely sand.