



# **An Arctic Man: The classic account of sixty-five years in Canada's North**

*Ernie Lyall*

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Ernie Lyall was born in Labrador in 1910 and joined the Hudson's Bay Company at a time when it was expanding its presence in the Eastern Arctic. He spent many years as a front-line player with the company, building stores and developing trade with the local people. He became part of the Inuit community by marrying an Inuk and together with his wife Nipisha he raised a large family, some members of which play significant roles in today's Nunavut. Ernie's fluency in both Inuktitut and English made him a key interpreter and witness to many historic events in the Baffin region for over half a century, giving him insight into both sides of the cultural divide in the North and earning him respect from many quarters. In 1949 he and his family settled in Taloyoak (then known as Spence Bay) where he eventually left the HBC to become a wildlife officer with the Government of the Northwest Territories.

Ernie's story illustrates the realities of life for Inuit in the Canadian North during the last years in their camps on the land, a world that has now in large part been lost to history. His autobiography is unique in the perspective it offers and his original 1979 text is presented here with a foreword which provides new insights into Ernie's comments linking the old Inuit world with the new one in the modern Nunavut. Ernie's children reflect the cross-cultural bridging taught them by their parents and today contribute to the economic and community development of the North through a variety of roles, including leadership in the co-operative movement, land claim boards, business and government.

*An Arctic Man* not only tells about Inuit life as it was actually lived on the land but also illustrates how change, southern influences and the move into permanent communities impacted their society. This book offers a window onto the remarkable transition that occurred in the Canadian Eastern Arctic for much of the twentieth century with a frankness, insight and humour that was very much a part of Ernie Lyall's straightforward everyday style.

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