

*Remembering the Years of My Life: Journeys of a Labrador Inuit Hunter.* Recounted by Paulus Maggo; edited with an Introduction by Carol Brice-Bennett.

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Volume 18, numéro 1, spring 2002

The New Early Modern Newfoundland: Part One

URI : [https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/nflds18\\_1rv01](https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/nflds18_1rv01)

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Éditeur(s)

Faculty of Arts, Memorial University

ISSN

1198-8614 (imprimé)

1715-1430 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Kennedy, J. (2002). Compte rendu de [*Remembering the Years of My Life: Journeys of a Labrador Inuit Hunter*. Recounted by Paulus Maggo; edited with an Introduction by Carol Brice-Bennett.] *Newfoundland Studies*, 18(1), 129–133.

## REVIEWS

*Remembering the Years of My Life: Journeys of a Labrador Inuit Hunter.* Re-counted by Paulus Maggo; edited with an Introduction by Carol Brice-Bennett. St. John's: ISER, MUN, Social and Economic Studies, No. 63, 188 p., refs., trade pbk., 1999, \$19.95, ISBN 0-919666-95-7.

### JOHN KENNEDY

CONTRARY TO THE CHARGE that Labrador (and other) Inuit are 'studied to death' or that every Inuit family includes an anthropologist, very little recent, long-term, anthropological field research has occurred in Inuit communities since around 1980.

In contrast, various dimensions of Labrador Innu (formerly called "Naskapi-Montagnais Indians") life are well-documented. Innu have been the subjects of excellent ethnohistory (e.g., Leacock and Rothschild, 1994; Mailhot, 1997); ethnography (e.g., Henriksen, 1973; Mailhot, 1997); politically engaged journalism (Wadden, 1991; Lowe, 1998); participatory action research (e.g., Fouillard, 1995; Samson et al., 1999); and land use and occupancy research (Armitage, 1990), plus penetrating videos such as *Hunters and Bombers* (1990), *The Two Worlds of the Innu* (1994), *In the Place of the Boss: Utshimassits* (1996), and others.

The closest Inuit and interested academics have to a holistic ethnography of Labrador Inuit is Ben-Dor's study of Makkovik (1966), reporting on research conducted in 1962-63. In saying this, I acknowledge the useful contributions to various dimensions of Inuit life made by Williamson and the Brantenbergs in Nain; Richling and Ross in Hopedale; myself in Makkovik; and others, not to mention some stories in *Them Days* magazine; videos produced by the OKalaKatiget Soci-

ety; occasional publications by the Labrador Inuit Association, mainly *Our Footprints are Everywhere* (1977); and a handful of good consultancy reports.

This lack of recent research on Labrador Inuit hinders understanding of the real problems Inuit face. During the winter of 2000, for example, a rash of suicides, one homicide, and roughly ten deaths by natural causes (including that of Paulus Maggo) saddened the community of Nain, Labrador. Teaching a university course (Labrador Society and Culture) that winter, I struggled to answer my students' (some from Labrador) questions of *why* these deaths, particularly the suicides, had occurred. I qualified my response by acknowledging the dearth of recent research, then cobbled together an explanation based on older Labrador publications and on the handful of recent studies from elsewhere, such as Dorais' (1997) long-term study of northern Québec Inuit. It is within this context that I read (and offer this apologetically belated review of) *Remembering the Years of My Life: Journeys of a Labrador Inuit Hunter*, the autobiography of the late Paulus Maggo in which Maggo recounts 60 years of his life on the Labrador coast. The book, edited and with an introduction by Carol Brice-Bennett, is a welcome addition to the small number of recent works on Labrador Inuit.

The editor's preface explains her methods in compiling this life history, an earlier version of which was commissioned for the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. After selecting Maggo as subject, the editor joined a hired Inuit interviewer for the first interview in Nain and "then monitored the progress of later sessions during the winter of 1994 as best I could from my office in Happy Valley-Goose Bay" (10). Maggo's autobiography is based on fourteen unstructured interviews recorded on an unspecified number of cassette tapes, which, once translated into English by the editor's Inuit field assistants in Nain, were bridged together by the editor into a manuscript and then translated back into Inuktitut for Maggo's approval. Perhaps understandably, but of methodological importance, the reader sees no sample of the raw interview data, which might have been useful given the "major editorial adjustments" (11) necessary to produce the published account.

Brice-Bennett examined the Moravian *Periodical Accounts* and other relevant documents to assemble the historical, biographical, and genealogical background to Maggo's life. Centrepiece of the editor's Introduction is her impressive detective work in Moravian Mission documents to compile genealogies of Maggo and his late wife, Naeme Martin. Both the Maggo and Martin families moved often during the early twentieth century. Thus, while Maggo was born south of Makkovik in 1910, he was raised at Lance Ground, Makkovik, and Hopedale, before moving to Nain in 1921.

Maggo's autobiography is ordered chronologically, beginning with his remarkably vivid memories of his early years at Kangatjak or Lance Ground (named for the sand lance, a bait species in the cod fishery). Maggo's descriptions of children's games (58-60); of Inuit-Innu relations (60-61; 94-98); of boys' obligations

to the midwives who delivered them (64); of the last generation of kayak construction and use (71-72); of his adolescent apprenticeship with hunters (74-83); of Inuit ecological knowledge (115-118); of customary law (137-149); of the tenacious ethnic boundary between Inuit and Kallunângajuit (or Kablunangajuit, native settlers, 163); and others, all either reinforce or augment our knowledge of twentieth-century Labrador Inuit culture.

Paulus Maggo emerges as a knowledgeable, warm, and generous Inuk. In tone and content, his narrative is consistent with the style and content of *Them Days* magazine in that Maggo reminisces about an earlier, "golden age" of Labrador life. Given that Maggo lived during the twentieth century, which the editor correctly characterizes as a time of change (48-55), it may surprise readers how little he or the editor says about past or present problems occasionally besetting Labrador Inuit, or indeed about anything controversial. The editor acknowledges this deficiency in her Preface (11-12), attributing it to insufficient funding. Consequently, one is left wondering how Maggo would have answered my students' questions. Perhaps if the editor had conducted the interviews she might have sought Maggo's opinions about the consequences of the changing times in which he lived. Untrained bilingual local interviewers, though extremely effective in certain research contexts, may have been content to let an informant (especially a knowledgeable and engaging one, such as Maggo) ramble on, rather than asking why such and such occurred, or cross-checking subjects covered earlier. In short then, the editor's armchair methodology deviates from standard anthropological practise and has a lot to say about the kind of book produced.

*Remembering the Years of My Life* contains several minor errors and points of possible confusion, which reviewers are obliged to clarify. First, on page 69 is a reference to a World War I radio station on "Dance Island" outside of Makkovik; Maggo was undoubtedly referring to Dunn's (or Dunn) Island. Second, on page 108, the term "salt bulk" is defined as "salt used in preserving codfish" (177) rather than, as I expect Maggo meant, green fish or layered, undried salted cod. Possibly confusing points are Brice-Bennett's use (e.g., 17 and 51) of the year 1942 with reference to the opening of Goose Bay, which began the year earlier. However, the editor provides the correct date in a footnote on page 180, when mentioning Maggo's failed attempt to obtain employment at Goose Bay in 1942. Another point of potential confusion is the editor's footnote on page 173 which suggests that Davis Inlet was "originally called David's Inlet when European traders first established a station there in about 1846." This contradicts several maps from the 1760s and 1770s (such as Lieutenant Curtis' 1774 map) showing Davis Inlet, and earlier associations between Davis Inlet and explorer John Davis. Finally, the editor's characterization of the Labrador Inuit Association as representing "Native residents in five coastal communities, from Rigolet to Nain" (54) ignores the Association's very sizeable (Plaice, 1997, suggests one-half) membership in the Upper Lake Melville region.

My penultimate point questions the editor's approach to source citation. Brice-Bennett's documentation relies very heavily on references to her own, largely unpublished work. In some instances she does so even when earlier, published references document one thing or another. For example, Maggo (96) provides his own account of government's relocation of Innu from Davis Inlet to Nutak in 1948 from where, as Henriksen (1973:14) wrote, Innu then walked inland back to Davis Inlet. However, Brice-Bennett's footnote on page 179 refers the reader to her own (1986) report, rather than to Henriksen's (1973) more available original source. In relying so heavily on her own unpublished work on Labrador, readers unfamiliar with the literature might conclude that few other researchers had actually lived and worked with Labrador people. Thus, excepting one reference to Richling, the published work of all other anthropologists who conducted fieldwork in Inuit communities between approximately 1960 and 1980 is ignored, even when some of it, in my view, might have illuminated the issues Maggo discusses.

The editor has assembled a number of photographs appropriately placed to illustrate the narrative. An index might have helped readers locate particular topics, though the editor's footnotes are helpful, often amplifying points made in the narrative. In sum, although Maggo's reminiscences may not answer my students' questions about the distressing winter of 2000, they are a welcome addition to Labrador Inuit studies.

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*In Great Waters: The Epic Story of the Battle of the Atlantic, 1939-1945*. Spencer Dunmore. Toronto, McClelland and Stewart Inc., xiii, 342p., illu., appendix, notes, bibliog., index, hardcover, \$34.99, 1999. ISBN 0-7710-2929-2.

## CHRISTOPHER SHARPE

THERE ARE ALREADY a great many books about the Battle of the Atlantic including the ground-breaking work by Hadley (1985), the magisterial books by Milner (1985, 1994), more recent works by Harbron (1993) and Sarty (1998, 2001) and the more popular works by Lawrence (1979), Lamb (1977, 1986) and Curry (1990). So it is legitimate to ask whether Dunmore unveils any new information, or provides any new interpretations or insights into the Battle. The answer is "no." This book is not based on new research, and simply re-tells a story already told, and told much better, elsewhere.

The book is poorly organized. For example, although the "air gap" is mentioned in places throughout the book, it is not really discussed until Chapter 13, where we are told that it has been closed. The book is also very unbalanced. There are three chapters (55 pages out of total of 301) devoted to a discussion of the battle for convoys SC122 and HX 229. This was a pivotal battle, but its treatment here is overly long, especially given the fact that Middlebrook (1976) devoted an entire book to it.

Spencer Dunmore began his writing career as a novelist, and this is very apparent in the current book. One of its serious problems is that the author apparently could not decide whether to write a serious non-fiction work, or an adventure pot-boiler. He attempts to make the story "dramatic" by the constant use of overblown prose, and it just does not work. Is the reader really expected to believe that a Hudson bomber "seemed to tremble with eagerness to get to grips with the U-boat"? Is it necessary to describe a U-boat as a "long, low, dull grey monster" or a "long and slender form sliding effortlessly through the water like some huge fish," or to include the following passage in a description of an attack on U89 by HMS *Anemone* in March, 1943?