

Carol Brice-Bennett. *Hopedale: Three Ages of a Community in Northern Labrador*. Historic Sites Association of Newfoundland and Labrador, St. John's, NL, 2003, ISBN 0-919735-06-1

IN 1782 THE MORAVIAN CHURCH established its third Labrador mission next to the traditional Inuit winter village of Arvertôk, christening it Hoffenthal — “vale of hope” (later anglicized to Hopedale). The sod houses at Arvertôk were eventually abandoned, but a new form of hybrid community thrived there. *Hopedale: Three Ages of a Community in Northern Labrador* is a popular history of one of the oldest mixed Inuit-European settlements in Canada by a leading authority on Labrador Inuit history. Carol Brice-Bennett brings three decades of research experience and an obvious fondness for the people of northern Labrador to this sympathetic portrait of the Inuit, Settlers, and missionaries who persevered through devastating epidemics and repeated economic busts. The three principal chapters laying out the historical narrative are generously interspersed with boxed asides on notable events and people. The anecdotes are sometimes directly excerpted from historical documents, and the whole is lavishly illustrated with archival and modern photographs, artwork, and diagrams, giving it the flavour of a scrapbook of Hopedale's history.

The first section sketches the precontact and early contact-era history of Labrador. Arvertôk (“place of bowhead whales” in Inuktitut) was likely first settled by Inuit in the sixteenth century, assuming prominence in the seventeenth and eighteenth as the crux of a pan-coastal trading network in which northern whale products moved against iron and other European goods obtained around the Strait of Belle Isle. Unfortunately, extensive archaeological digging at Arvertôk and other sites in the Hopedale region in the 1930s (and even earlier antiquarian collecting) pre-dated the development of modern excavation and recording techniques, and so produced disappointingly little information on Inuit lifeways of the period. The more sophisticated archaeological investigations of the past 30 years, not considered by Brice-Bennett, have substantially clarified our understanding of pre-mission Inuit economy and social relations, though much still remains to be learned.

The nineteenth-century heyday of the Moravian missions is the subject of the book's second, and most substantial, section. Northern Inuit were increasingly drawn to southern Labrador during the eighteenth century by opportunities for trading and raiding, leading British authorities to acquiesce to Moravian requests for land and trading concessions. By providing direct conduits for European goods in the northern homeland it was hoped that Inuit settlement could be contained north of Groswater Bay. This would allow Christianization of the Inuit in the north and expansion of the cod fishery in the south to proceed apace, without the mutual disruptions of rowdy trading contacts. The enterprise was so successful that by the early twentieth century a string of seven active missions stretched from Makkovik, south of Hopedale, to Killinek, off the northern tip of the Quebec-Labrador penin-

sula. The missionaries generated a copious archival record documenting not only mission business but many details of congregant's lives. This allows Brice-Bennett to create an intimate picture of community life during a period of profound social, cultural, and economic upheaval that witnessed the growth of local and schooner-based cod fisheries, the spread of literacy and Western forms of health care, and the emergence of a mixed-ancestry Settler community. Since the Moravians implemented similar ecclesiastical, commercial, and social policies at all the missions, and Inuit moved easily amongst the communities embraced by their far-flung kinship networks, Hopedale's story is illustrative of conditions on the northern coast as a whole during this period.

The final section recounts the major events of the twentieth century, and is followed by appendices consisting of profiles of prominent citizens, a timeline, and lists of key church figures. A financial crisis in the missions' commercial dealings precipitated the sale of the trading operation to the rival Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) in 1924. With the collapse of markets for furs and fish during the Great Depression even the HBC could not achieve profitability, forcing it to relinquish its commercial interests on the Labrador coast to the Newfoundland government in 1942. World War II and Confederation with Canada ushered in an era of broad government involvement in Labrador's affairs, finally supplanting the Moravians' quasi-governmental role in the lives of Hopedale's citizens. Construction of the airbase at Goose Bay and an American radar station next to town brought new types of employment and exotic cultural influences, which along with social assistance programs and high prices for fish and pelts fostered growth of a southern-style cash economy. The subsequent departure of the Americans, declining commodity prices, and collapse of first cod and then salmon and char stocks resulted in a cascade of economic realignments that continues to the present.

Hopedale succeeds admirably as a community profile and an accessible introduction to northern Labrador history. It is not meant to be a critical history; there is little attention to social problems or conflicts, and no critical discussion of sources. Brice-Bennett has expertly mined an extensive archival record for the most striking and informative images and compiled them in a patchwork narrative that can be browsed in small, manageable portions. For sustained reading the elaborate juxtapositions and overlays of image and text, which draw heavily on the design aesthetic of brochures and museum exhibits, can be a bit overpowering. The lack of an index and the awkwardly elongated (for a paperbound volume) coffee table format pose additional difficulties for navigating the volume. Nevertheless, it should appeal to a broad non-specialist audience with an interest in Labrador history, and will be a useful reference for academic readers with particular interest in the pictorial history of Labrador.

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