



The Northern Copper Inuit: A History

Richard G. Condon, Julia Ogina, Holman Elders

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In Canada's far north, on the western coast of Victoria Island, the Copper Inuit people of Holman (the Ulukhaktokmiut) have experienced a rate of social and economic change rarely matched in human history. Owing to their isolated, inaccessible location, three hundred miles north of the Arctic Circle, they were one of the last Inuit groups to be contacted by Western explorers, missionaries, and fur traders. Since contact, however, they have been transformed from a nomadic and independent, hunting-based society to one dependent upon southern material goods such as televisions, radios, snowmobiles, ATVs, and permanent residential housing provided by the Government of the Northwest Territories. Anthropologist Richard G. Condon witnessed many of these social, economic, and material changes during his eighteen years of research in the Holman community. With translator/research associate Julia Ogina and the elders of Holman, Condon vividly chronicles the history of the Holman region by combining observations of community change with extensive archival research and oral history interviews with community elders. This chronicle begins with a discussion of the prehistory of the Holman region, moves to the early and late contact periods, and concludes with a description of modern community life. The dramatic transformation of the Northern Copper Inuit is also reflected through nearly one hundred photographs and drawings that complement the text. Each chapter opens with a reproduction of one of the striking Holman prints, depicting scenes from traditional Copper Inuit life.

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