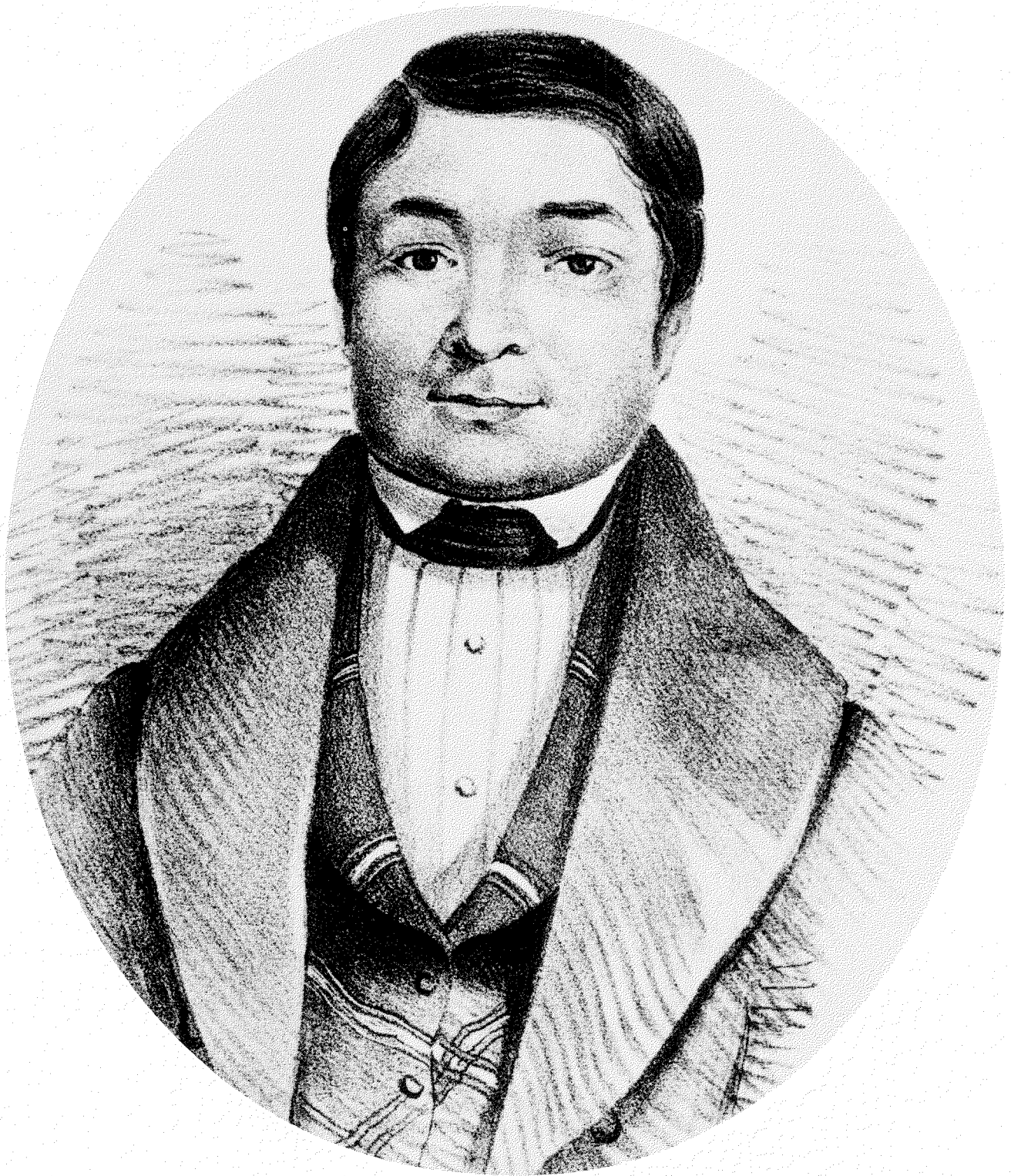


## Eenooloopik (ca. 1820-1847)



From Alexander M'Donald's *A Narrative of Some Passages in the History of Eenooloopik, a Young Esquimaux.*

In 1840, life for the Cumberland Sound Inuit was much the same as it had been for many years. Although they knew of the whalers, the British Navy, and the Hudson's Bay Company, these Inuit had felt but little influence from such strangers. Within 20 years, however, their way of life was changed profoundly, and although he probably did not realize it, Eenoooloopik was the harbinger of that change.

Eenoooloopik was born around 1820 at Qimisuk, on the west coast of Cumberland Sound. While still young, he travelled with his family on an unusual voyage by umiak, skirting the coastline of Cumberland Sound until they reached Cape Enderby on Davis Strait. The boy closely observed the outline of the coast as they rowed slowly past. At Cape Enderby, they met a group of whalers and decided to continue their voyage to Cape Searle, a location frequented by the whalers, where they settled. Contact with these strangers fired Eenoooloopik's curiosity about their land, and a desire grew in him to visit their homeland. Twice he made plans to depart, but each time the pleas of his mother kept him at home.

At about this same time, unpredictable catches in Davis Strait and worsening ice conditions had the fishery concerned. At least one widely publicized article appeared in Britain suggesting that only diversification into trade and the establishment of permanent whaling stations could save the fishery. In 1833, William Penny, mate on the *Traveller*, was sent to investigate Inuit reports of a large bay full of whales to the south of Exeter Bay. Penny's trip failed, but he tried again in 1839 to locate the bay, known to the Inuit as "Tenudiackbeek." Penny might have met Eenoooloopik previously, but it was probably 1839 when he discovered that Eenoooloopik was a native of Tenudiackbeek and could map its entire coastline.

Here, the desires of both Penny and Eenoooloopik merged. Penny wanted to take the Inuk to Britain because he felt Eenoooloopik's information could convince the Navy to sponsor an expedition to Tenudiackbeek, and perhaps keep the fishery alive. Eenoooloopik, for his part, still harboured a desire to visit the land of these strangers, and so, after Penny gave presents to Eenoooloopik's family, the Inuk boarded ship and departed for Scotland, even amid continued entreaties from his mother.

Who was more surprised by their encounter, Eenoooloopik or the natives of Aberdeen? Eenoooloopik must have been overwhelmed by all he experienced, but other than his expression of wonder and delight at what he saw, he gave every evidence of being in complete control. The skills so necessary to life in the Arctic were turned to the task of blending into Scottish society. His powers of observation, memory, and mimicry were so great that, while the Scots were delighted by his kayaking and bird hunting demonstrations, they were especially impressed by his ability to mimic correct manners and to act the gentleman on all occasions.

Unfortunately, as with many indigenous people removed from their native clime and subjected to that of Britain, Eenoooloopik soon became sick and spent much of his time in Aberdeen deathly ill with pneumonia. The newspapers regularly reported on his condition, and when he was fully recovered, he was shown the town. He almost certainly witnessed the wedding of his friend Penny; coming from a culture where little ritual surrounded marriage, Eenoooloopik must have been struck by this elaborate ceremony. Even more strange were the elegant balls he attended in honour of Queen Victoria's marriage to Albert; one can only imagine Eenoooloopik's astonishment

when he learned that all this extravagant entertainment — a full orchestra, military band, speeches, and much toasting — was in honour of the chief of the Britons, who was not even present. Such balls, his theatre attendance, his visit to a new department store where he was given a china tea cup and saucer for his "mamma," and his sense of humour were common features in the local papers.

For Penny, his part in the experiment was not such an immediate success. Despite an excellent map Eenoooloopik prepared of Tenudiackbeek, the Navy was unwilling to back an expedition. Without government support, Penny was forced to catch whales first, and only then, if time permitted, to explore. As well, Penny's plans to educate Eenoooloopik in boat building and other skills came to naught because of the Inuk's poor health.

Although Eenoooloopik had made many friends in Aberdeen, he eventually grew homesick, sailing for the Arctic on April 1, 1840. On August 2 the *Bon Accord*, along with three other ships, entered Tenudiackbeek, and three weeks later Eenoooloopik rejoined his mother and siblings who had travelled overland from Cape Searle to meet him. His biographer, Alexander M'Donald, notes that he did not seem at all unhappy when he left the whaler.

Back home, he resumed a normal life and does not appear to have tried to impress people unduly with his tales or possessions. He married Amitak shortly after leaving Penny, and by 1844, when Penny once again returned to Cumberland Sound, Eenoooloopik had a son called Angalook. Three years later, in the summer of 1847, Eenoooloopik died of consumption, and after his death his name — according to custom — was given to a newborn nephew.

Certainly Eenoooloopik's family were great travellers, even more so than the average Inuit family. Both Eenoooloopik and his brother, Totocatapik, were well known as great voyagers and intelligent men. A sister, Kur-king, migrated to Igloodik, and another sister, Tookoolito or Hannah, travelled to England in 1853 and later accompanied Charles Francis Hall to the United States, Hudson Bay, King William Island, and Greenland.

Every year after Eenoooloopik's return, whalers visited Cumberland Sound. In 1851-1852 Sidney Buddington led the first intentional wintering by a whaling crew, and two years later Penny conducted the first wintering with ship. Penny's endeavour was so successful that wintering over and the maintenance of permanent whaling stations became common practices until the end of commercial whaling in the eastern Arctic. Several stations were established both in and around Cumberland Sound. This constant presence of the whalers and their requirements for both whaling crews and for hunters led to a profound change in the local Inuit's lives.

#### FURTHER READINGS

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