

SPECIAL SESSION

COUNCIL OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

Minutes of the fourth (special) meeting
of the Council held on Friday the 1st
of May, 1925, in the Office of the
Commissioner - Mr. W. W. Cory.

PRESENT:

Mr. R. A. Gibson	- Deputy Commissioner
Col. Cortlandt Starnes	Member of Council
Dr. Charles Camsell	- " " "
Mr. H. H. Rowatt	- " " "
Mr. O. S. Finnie	- " " " and Director, N. W. T.

Mr. R. B. Matheson
representing

Mr. J. W. Greenway	- Member of Council
Mr. K. R. Daly	- Legal Adviser and Acting Secretary.

On motion of the Chairman, Mr. Daly acted as
Secretary of the meeting.

The Chairman introduced Dr. Knud Rasmussen
to the meeting, and Mr. Finnie, in a short speech, moved a
vote of welcome to Dr. Rasmussen, and of thanks for his
services to the Council; seconded by Colonel Starnes -
carried.

Dr. Rasmussen replied briefly, expressing his
appreciation and his pleasure at being of use. He stated
that his Committee had authorized him to offer the
Dominion Government any duplicate specimens of ethnological
importance which he had.

Dr. Rasmussen then showed Dr. Camsell and the
other members the course which he had followed during his
three years, 1921-24, in the Arctic, explaining that some
members of his expedition had in 1922-23-24 explored
Southampton Island to Cockburn and Admiralty Inlet. He
stated that the cartographers had made maps of the interior
of this land which had not previously been fully mapped,
and which would consequently be of great use in filling
in topographical details. He promised to furnish the
Council with copies of these maps. He himself had gone
inland to Baker Lake during the season of 1920-21. In
1921-22 he proceeded along the coast of this region. His
companions had then gone out to civilization by way of
Winnipeg. In 1923, Dr. Rasmussen went to Boethia Bay and
Boethia Peninsula, and King William's Land, where he met
with natives who had no white man's gear and had never
before seen a white man. In the summer he went to the
Nass River, and in the autumn met the Bathurst Inlet
people near Coronation Gulf and proceeded along the sea
coast to the other side of Mackenzie Delta, making a
complete and accurate census of the natives met with.

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promised to furnish Mr. Finnie with a list of all the Eskimos in the country. Offhand, he stated that the population was about 1,200, with possibly another 3,000 inland and in other parts of the Canadian north, the mainland coast being, as a rule, the northernmost limit of habitation. He stated that the Eskimos were beginning to come back to the sea to make a living, and were now trapping only to get luxuries.

He explained that the Eskimos originated in the Northern interior of Canada around the Great Lakes of that district and emigrated northeast to Greenland and northwest to Alaska, subsequent to which there was another emigration by the Alaskan Eskimos along the coast to Greenland, the cultural remains of such a migration being plainly evident.

At the request of Mr. Finnie, he stated that he would be very glad indeed to furnish all the information in his power to officials of the Branch who were being sent in to the country he had travelled through.

He advised strongly against permitting traders to furnish high power rifles to the natives. The 40-40 Winchester, he was understood to say, would be amply sufficient for all their purposes, the natives having no idea whatever of conservation.

With regard to peonage, Dr. Rasmussen stated that the Eskimo were in a different position to the Indians with regard to the trading companies and traders. They were a much more independent type of people, and so far, were dependent on the traders only for luxuries. He stated that he believed it was impossible to keep the natives in their original primitive state; that they had already become partially accustomed to products of civilization, and recommended that they be allowed to complete the process as soon as possible, but under supervision.

He favoured missionaries before doctors as necessary to the welfare of the Eskimo, quite apart from any religious aspect of the case. Any missionary, he held, was better than none, but, of course, the ideal combination would be the medical missionary who could attend to them both physically and ethically.

He stated that female infanticide was extensively practised to such an extent indeed that the young man who wanted a wife would marry a widow, for whose widowhood the prospective bridegroom was generally responsible, and instanced one family in which five girl babies had been killed before one son was born to the couple. Such a practice he considered as not to the best interests of the Eskimo.

After a renewed expression of thanks by the Council, the meeting then adjourned.

(sgd) K. R. Daly,

Acting Secretary

Approved

(sgd) W. W. Cory

Commissioner