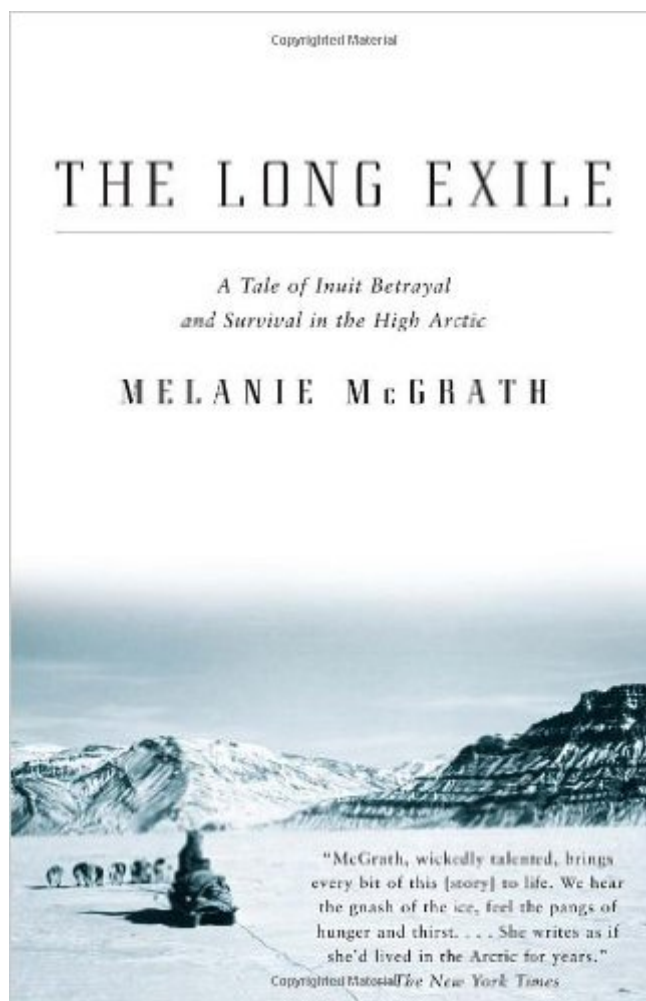


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The Long Exile: A Tale Of Inuit Betrayal And Survival In The High Arctic



Synopsis

In 1952, the Canadian government forcibly relocated three dozen Inuit from their flourishing home on the Hudson Bay to the barren, arctic landscape of Ellesmere Island, the most northerly landmass on the planet. Among this group was Josephie Flaherty, the unrecognized, half-Inuit son of filmmaker Robert Flaherty, director of *Nanook of the North*. In a narrative rich with human drama, Melanie McGrath follows three generations of the Flaherty family—Robert, Josephie, and Josephie's daughters—to bring this extraordinary tale of deception and harsh deprivation to life.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The Long Exile could easily have leant itself to melodrama. It's a harsh story, well told, and definitely worth reading. The arc of the Inuit history - their millennium-long adaptation to their environment, the cultural ripples caused by the earliest European arrivals, the eventual idealized view of their hard but "simple" and "happy" existence romanticized accidentally by Robert Flaherty in "Nanook of the North", and the Hudson Bay Company's and Canadian government's determination (after two hundred years of trying to make the Inuit dependent upon the HBC) to enforce an about-face and compel the Inuit to live solely off the land - all of that encompasses countless individual tragedies that could have been played out at full volume. But Melanie McGrath chooses a different approach. Writing with calm and control, she lays out the story of the creator of *Nanook*. Without passing judgment she describes the child and Inuit mistress he left behind at the end of filming, and how different their daily lives became than the lifestyle memorialized in the film, even as the rest of the world began to take "Nanook" as the absolute Inuit reality. With occasional understated phrases

of incredulity, McGrath describes Flaherty's son growing up in an environment where whites representing competing agendas (the fur trade, religion, the government, and the educational and medical establishments) all competed to decide what was best for Inuit peoples, without ever asking the Inuit themselves. And when it would have been possible for her to raise her narrative tone to an indignant screed as she describes the relocation of Inuit to the Arctic Desert (as far from their native landscape as New York is from Cuba), if anything McGrath becomes even more understated.

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