



Encounters on the Passage: Inuit Meet the Explorers

Dorothy Harley Eber

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Inuit elders who grew up in camps on the shores of Frobisher Bay can tell you what happened when Martin Frobisher arrived with his vessel in 1576: "He fired two warning shots into the air. So right away there were some grievances." Frobisher's shots were the opening salvos in the search for the Northwest Passage, a search that lasted for more than four hundred years and riveted the Western world, particularly in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. In *Encounters on the Passage*, present day Inuit tell the stories that have been passed down from their ancestors of the first encounters with European explorers.

In many of these stories the old cosmogony is still in place, with shamans playing starring roles opposite "the strangers intruding on the Inuit lands." Dorothy Harley Eber presents stories told to her about the expeditions of Sir Edward Parry, Sir John Ross, Sir John Franklin, and the Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen, and sets them squarely in historical context. In the case of the disastrous Franklin expedition, new information opens up another fascinating chapter on the Franklin tragedy. Collected over twelve years on visits to communities in Nunavut, these remarkable stories of expeditionary forces and their dealings with native peoples will be new and exciting reading for those interested in the search for the Northwest Passage, the Franklin tragedy, and traditions of oral history.

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