

A cosmopolitan gathering meets every summer on the north shore of McTavish bay, Great Bear lake. This is not comparable with the annual fairs of Barter island, the Colville delta, or Kotzebue sound; a parallel is found, however, even to-day, in the Akililik River concourse—the “mysterious Akililik of the Greenlanders” (Murdoch, quoted by Rink in a work not now at hand).¹ The characterizing thing common to Bear lake and the Akililik river is that though there is plenty of game yet people do not come primarily to hunt; and though there is much trading, trade is not the chief object—every one who comes to either place comes to get wood for his own use and for trade with others.

In the area bounded roughly by the Coppermine on the east, Dismal lake and Kendall river on the north, Dease river on the west, and Great Bear lake on the south, there met, the summer of 1910, members of every tribe, except the Hanerāgmūt, of those that frequent either shore of Dolphin and Union strait and Coronation gulf from Cape Bexley to the Kent peninsula, while we know that other years people from even as far east as Ogden bay may be found here. In other words, people who usually go to the Akililik for wood, come to Bear lake occasionally for the same purpose. A glance at the map will show what a unifying influence these two gathering regions must have had on the culture of a large part of the Eskimo race. Even the Greenlanders knew of the Akililik vaguely; it would be strange if careful inquiry on this head in Smith sound and Hudson strait did not bring out similar or more definite knowledge.

It may be thought that the flocking of the Eskimo to the vicinity of Bear lake is a thing of recent years, the opinion being based on the fact that none of the numerous travellers who have visited Bear lake have informed us on the subject. That they did not do so ceases to be strange when one remembers that the first and last of these had Indians for guides who know about where the Eskimo may be expected, who are in deadly fear of

¹ The Akililik would not have remained so long “mysterious” (known only, so far as the writer is aware, through Greenlandic folk-lore) if travellers in northeastern Canada had taken the trouble to make geographic inquiries and to record the native names of conspicuous natural features. It is one of the large rivers of Canada and one of the chief foci of commercial activity and cultural development of Arctic America.