

room be turned over to the complainant, as well as the car. The convicted man was also ordered to pay McMurtrie \$1,000 compensation.

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R. v. Eerkiyoot et al

Assisting to Commit Suicide

THE primitive, semi-savage existence that still prevails among some of the Eskimo tribes in the remote, lonely wastes of Canada's northland is revealed in some of the terse official reports covering this crime.

First news of the incident came from L. A. Learmonth an archaeologist of the Royal Ontario Museum, who was working in the Fort Ross District. In a letter that reached the RCMP Cambridge Bay Detachment on Jan. 11, 1949, he reported that a young Eskimo, Eerkiyoot, had killed his mother, Nukashook, during the summer of 1948. It was believed that he had been helped by Ishakak, another native. The locale of the crime was Eelounaling, a tribal settlement about halfway between Thom Bay and Fort Ross on the east coast of Boothia Peninsula.

On February 4 two constables from Cambridge Bay left by RCAF plane for Fort Ross, but when the airmen were unable to locate a prearranged landing place they returned to their base. Ten days later another flight was made, and this time the pilot made a successful landing on a stretch of sea ice marked out by E. W. Lyall, a trader.

A week later the two policemen, Mr. Lyall who was to act as interpreter, and an Eskimo guide left the trader's camp on the trek to Eelounaling. They arrived there four days later and found both suspects had left the village. Eerkiyoot returned home next day, but the other Eskimo had gone on to Gjoa Haven, a King William Land trading post. Said the constable's laconic report: "Effort was made to locate the body of Nukashook, but same was not done due to drifts of snow 15 to 20 feet in depth where her grave was reported located."

Because the plane was to return for them on March 7, the two constables hurried back to the landing strip at Lyall's camp, taking Eerkiyoot and his wife with them. At that time the young Eskimo was not under arrest, a precautionary measure necessitated by potential hostile reactions from the other natives. It was decided that one constable would return to Cambridge Bay in the plane as an escort for the native couple. The other policeman was then to go back to Eelounaling, apprehend Ishakak, and bring out the body of the dead woman. While writing the first report on the investigation on March 16, the constable reported that the aircraft had not reappeared and food was getting dangerously low. But a few days later a plane brought in supplies and returned to Cambridge Bay with Eerkiyoot, his wife, and the constable.

On April 18 the other investigator accompanied by Mr. Lyall returned to Eelounaling. Soon they had uncovered the body, partly decomposed and frozen stiff, but still recognizable. It was removed to Spence Bay on April 24. A month later the policeman and a native guide, set out from Spence Bay for King William Land, from where they hoped to continue on to Cambridge Bay with their grisly passenger. Unfortunately a severe epidemic of influenza was raging through the native settlements there, and the populace was in a sorry plight. Hope of continuing his journey was abandoned by the policeman, and on June 29 he returned to Spence Bay. But his patrol was not in vain, for he brought back Ishakak as a prisoner.

In the meantime one of the Eskimo witnesses had died, but from others and Ishakak the story of the crime was pieced