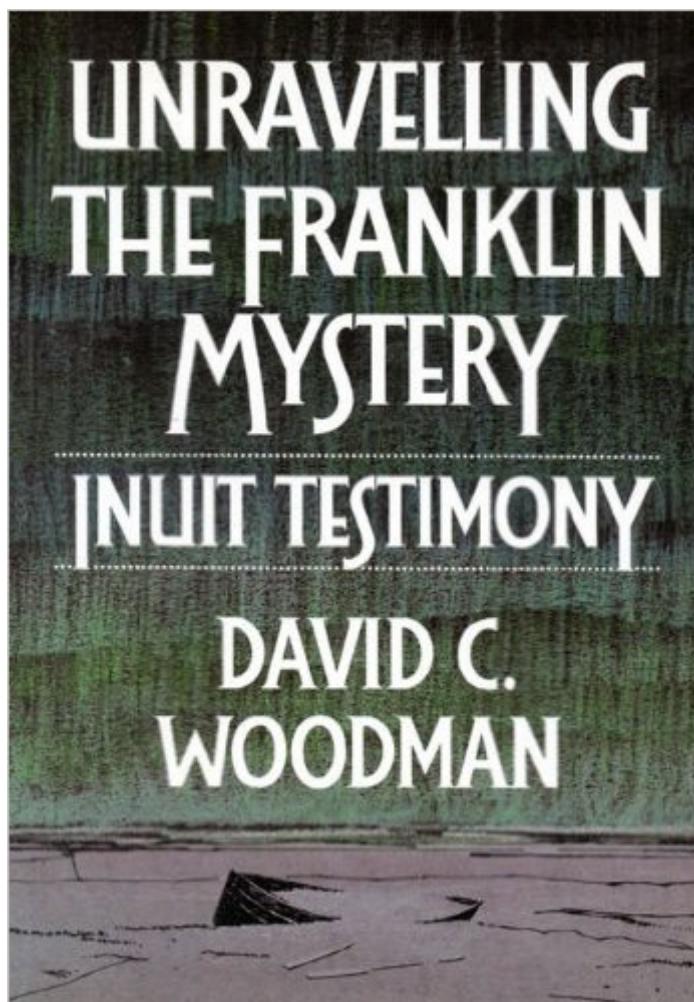


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Unravelling The Franklin Mystery: Inuit Testimony (Mcgill-Queen's Native And Northern Series)



Synopsis

David Woodman's reconstruction of the mysterious events surrounding the tragic Franklin expedition boldly challenges standard interpretations and promises to replace them. Among the many who have tried to discover the truth behind the Franklin disaster, Woodman is the first to recognise the profound importance of the Inuit testimony and to analyse it in depth. He concludes from his investigations that the Inuit probably did visit Franklin's ships while the crew was still on board and that there were some Inuit who actually saw the sinking of one of the ships. He maintains that fewer than ten bodies were found at Starvation Cove and that the last survivors left the cove in 1851, three years after the standard account assumes them to be dead. Woodman also disputes the conclusion of Owen Beattie and John Geiger's book "Frozen in time" that lead poisoning was a major contributing cause of the disaster. Much of the Inuit testimony presented in "Unravelling the Franklin Mystery" has never before been published. The earliest Woodman quotes was recorded by Franklin searchers only nine years after the disappearance of the Franklin team. Inuit testimony provided Woodman with the pivotal clue in his re-construction of the puzzle of the Franklin disaster: 'I proceeded from the assumption that all Inuit stories concerning white men should have a discoverable factual basis ...and managed to discover a scenario which allowed use of all the native recollections, solved some troubling discrepancies in the physical evidence and led to some significant new conclusions as to the fate of the beleaguered sailors'. Whether or not one agrees with Woodman's conclusions, his account is compelling and his analysis impressive.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book is one of the first to examine the Inuit stories, or "traditions" in detail, and it helps bring a clearer picture, in some respects to the lost Franklin Expedition. Many of the Inuit and native stories were discounted by searcher and some historians, partly due to prejudice and because of the confused nature of them. This is understandable; the Inuit have no real way of explaining time frames or dates, and the oral tradition of passing down stories and information does not give much of an idea as to when something happened. A storyteller can often only say whether this happened in their lifetime or not. Charles Francis Hall's expedition, which lasted for years in the vain hope that someone from the Franklin crew were still alive did much to throw light on how much the Inuit knew about the area, and especially the presence of white explorers. He did not always take the word of those he spoke with, however and often came to conclusions that were later found to be false. This book has put aside some of the long-held beliefs as to what happened to the expedition and how they tried to get out. It now appears that Capt. Crozier led a breakout of the remaining 105 crewmen, but that they didn't get far. It appears some continued on in an effort to reach help, while others headed back toward King William Island. Some died on the way, while others died in other areas. A few even made it back to the Erebus and Terror, and one of those ships sailed further on, once it broke from the ice. What the book does not do is answer a lot of questions, because still the physical evidence is not there. The Inuit appears to have destroyed most of the written records, not realizing their worth.

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