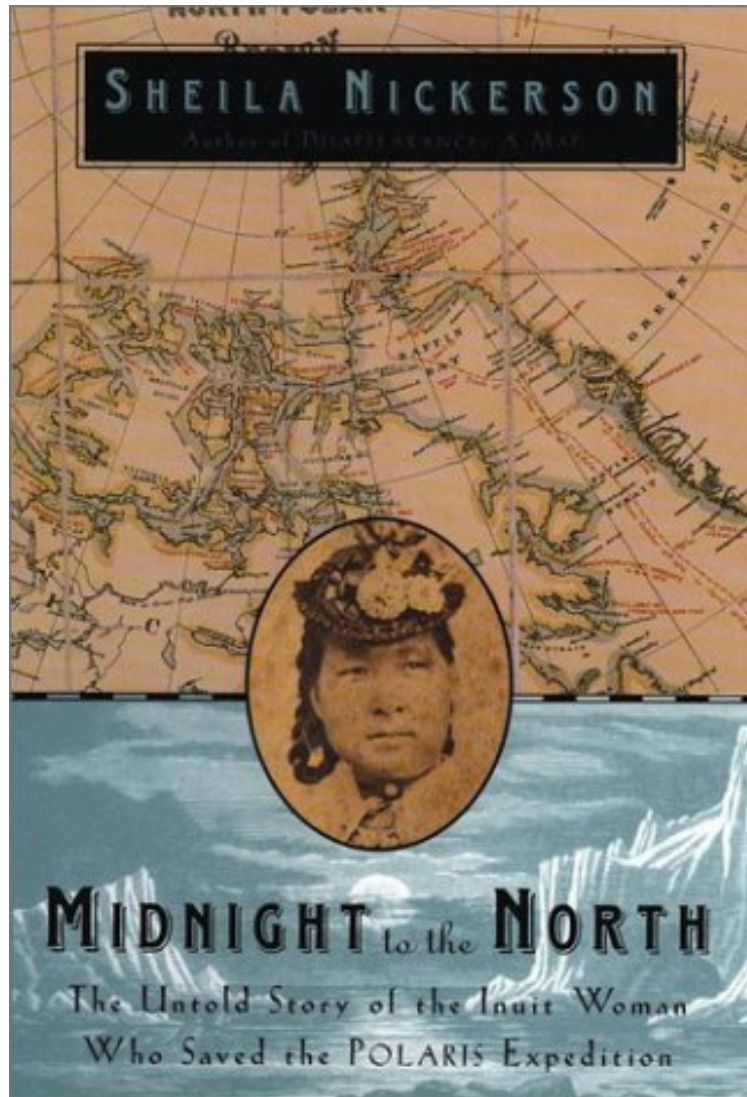


Midnight to the North: The Inuit Woman Who Saved the Polaris Expedition

Sheila Nickerson

audiobook / *ebooks / Download PDF / ePub / DOC



[Download](#)

[Read Online](#)

#3678521 in Books 2002-03-04 2002-03-04Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 9.36 x .83 x 6.221, #File Name: 1585421332224 pages | File size: 54.Mb

Sheila Nickerson : Midnight to the North: The Inuit Woman Who Saved the Polaris Expedition before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Midnight to the North: The Inuit Woman Who Saved the Polaris Expedition:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. TITLE IS MSLEADNG.By Joyce L. NelsonI this to be about the woman in the title. She sounds merely peripheral to the story about surviving a winter in extreme conditions, rather than the heroine of the story. She chewed the skins to make clothing for the group and all but we didn't really get to

know her. Good story about the hardships of the people trying to find out what happened to the Franklin party and what it takes to survive extreme conditions, but not much about the Inuit woman..3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. "Her intent was the driving force" By Friederike Knabe After greatly enjoying Steven Heighon's captivating novel *Afterlands: A Novel*, I was intrigued to find Sheila Nickerson's *MIDNIGHT TO THE NORTH*, a book that sets out to tell "The Untold Story of the Inuit Woman Who Saved the POLARIS Expedition" (as stated in the book's subtitle). Tookoolito (Hannah) and her husband Ebierbing (Joe) had traveled back and forth from their home territory on Baffin Island (Canada) to England and later to North America as interpreters, Arctic survival guides and food hunters, and also to assist with the promotion of Arctic explorations. Last but not least they were of great interest as a source for any clues concerning survivors of the failed Franklin expedition (1845-48). Captain Charles Francis Hall, obsessed with these topics, and having encountered both Inuit at a young age, included them in all of his exploration missions. When not on ships or on icy lands, the couple and their adopted daughter Punny settled in Groton, Connecticut. Award winning author and poet Sheila Nickerson's special interest in Tookoolito is part of a wider theme: the plight of Inuit women, whose essential and substantial contributions for English and American explorers' survival in the Arctic was either totally ignored or considerably minimized. The author concentrates on the story of this particular young woman, because she figured more clearly in the historical records than others. Her primary source is first and foremost Polaris Captain Hall's extensive accounts on his various expeditions, providing a detailed portrait of the Inuit couple over several decades. He led the failed Polaris expedition (1872-73) until his death on ship in 1872. To these reports Nickerson adds Lt. George Tyson's field notes and his subsequently published book on his experience on the Polaris and later on, when he took charge of part of the crew on an ice floe, separated from the vessel and drifting for more than six months in the icy waters. This group included Tookoolito and Ebierbing. However, Lt. George Tyson scarcely mentioned Hannah in his account of the crew's survival. Nickerson is fully aware of the unreliability of historical sources, using the image of a lens or magnifying glass to explain: "Tip the magnifying glass slightly and the terrain of words shifts as if by tectonic upheaval[...] Add time, and the record wears away, ridge after ridge crumbling until finally there is nothing left but stardust." From such unreliable sources, quoted throughout her book, it is difficult to perceive how Nickerson could create anything like a solid image of her heroine. It appears that her assessment may have been based more on hope and her general knowledge of Inuit women's lives than on the sources cited. For example, for her strong statement that Tookoolito "became for the floe what her people would have called a *tormaq*, an invisible ruler or guiding spirit..." and that Tookoolito's intent was "to be the driving force", Nickerson does not present any evidence that would confirm this contention. By contrast, in her condensed, yet comprehensive portrayal of the fate of numerous expeditions around the period between 1845 and 1890, and using a wide variety of sources, she emphasizes the importance of local knowledge that the (male) Inuit hunters provided and men's vital role in ensuring the ongoing food supply. In the middle of the book, Nickerson links her personal story to with that of her research into Tookoolito's life, seeing herself on a different kind of "floe", concerned about her mother's deteriorating condition. While in other contexts this comparison might be useful, it does not appear to have any role here. There are smaller issues one can quibble with in this account as it floats between a research project and a fictional story of a heroine who may not have been as "heroic" in the described circumstances as the reader is initially led to believe. Nevertheless, the book is an enjoyable read and introduction to the fascinating history of Northern explorations. The author's style is fluid and at times poetic. [Friederike Knabe] 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Misled by the title By Bruce in Toronto A bit of betwixed and between on the evaluation of this book. Well written, and a good read. Well researched. Tells its story well with the occasional tangent to explain the science or story behind the event, or the implication for future events. A few references to Inuit lore to tie the story together. But the promise of the title to tell the story of how Tookoolito "saved" the other eighteen sailors abandoned on an iceflow for six and a half months, is unfulfilled. The story of Tookoolito could fill about a dozen pages of the book. She also spends a lot of time speculating as to what Tookoolito might have done or felt. But her actions while of the ice flow were to try and keep their shelter clean. The hunting was done by her husband, the real hero. Spends a lot of time making parallels to her dying mother who if an Inuit would have been put out on the ice flow or enclosed in an exitless igloo. Instead, extensive and expensive medical treatments are given. If the book had been better subtitled, I'd feel better about a three star rating.

In 1871, Charles Francis Hall's Polaris expedition set out to be the first official American party to reach the North Pole. Five months later, the Polaris had become locked in ice and Hall was dead-likely murdered. The expedition members were set adrift for six months on the icy seas: a fifteen-hundred-mile journey that all survived, thanks to the skills of Hall's translator, Tookoolito, a thirty-four-year-old woman subsequently referred to as the "Sacagawea of the Ice." In *Midnight to the North*, Sheila Nickerson brings to life the emotional struggle of a wildly various group of people forced to stay together-despite one another's self-centered failings-during circumstances of extreme desperation. Imaginatively re-creating Tookoolito's life, she describes the Inuit woman's decades-long relationship with Hall; her presentation to the English court and experience as an exhibit in P. T. Barnum's museum; and the undermining of her sturdy faith in her native heritage by Hall's stern and often treacherous world. A meticulously

researched, gripping story of awesome peril and fascinating insight, *Midnight to the North* debunks contemporary Polaris accounts and reveals an untold side of Arctic exploration.

From Publishers Weekly Few Arctic exploration books offer a more compelling subject than Nickerson's account of Tookoolito, an Inuit woman she holds largely responsible for the survival of half the Polaris crew, who were stranded on an ice floe and abandoned by their ship in 1871. The book traces Tookoolito's life through the writings of the Polaris's original captain, Francis Hall, and George Tyson, the man in charge of the ice-floe party (who became Captain Tyson after Hall's mysterious demise). The story is engaging if slightly overwritten when it recounts the time when Hall was in command, explaining Tookoolito's life and experiences, as well as the ways she and her Inuit husband interacted with Westerners and Western society and vice versa. Nickerson is outstanding in illustrating Inuit customs, culture and legends; even seasoned readers of Arctic exploration books will learn something about Inuit ways. After Hall's death, however, the book suffers from a lack of information about Tookoolito, as Tyson and Tookoolito's husband, Ebierbing, emerge as strong characters. Much of this latter half of the story feels quickly told rather than carefully shown; Nickerson tries to compensate for the gaps with ramblings about, for instance, her research time in the library, astrophysics and her aging, ailing mother. These extraneous tidbits detract, and many readers will resent Nickerson's insertion of herself into what should be entirely Tookoolito's story. Still, the unique subject and Nickerson's real command of Inuit culture should carry the book through her digressions. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal An American explorer, Charles Francis Hall set out in 1871 to travel to the North Pole. His team traveled aboard the *Polaris* and included his translator, an Inuit woman named Tookoolito. Hall died within five months, the *Polaris* became trapped in ice, and his team ended up divided, with half stuck on a floating section of ice. Nickerson, the poet laureate of Alaska from 1977 to 1981 and a two-time winner of the Pushcart Prize, attempts to describe Tookoolito's life and how she helped the 19 team members survive on the ice for six and a half months. This book intertwines historical accounts of the time with Nickerson's recollections of the research process and her own sick mother. While successfully describing the hostile and difficult conditions faced by those trying to survive in the harsh northern climate, Nickerson's poetic recollections also seem ill matched to the rest of the book. In the initial chapters, she states that Tookoolito played a major part in the team's survival, but she rarely mentions her in the chapters describing the ice journey. Buy for the accurate descriptions of life in the North but not for women's studies collections. Alison Hopkins, Queens Borough P.L., NY Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist The *Polaris* expedition set off in 1871 to reach the North Pole but ended in disaster--the commander murdered, the ship destroyed, and the party split up. The fact that anyone survived may be a miracle, but it was due in large part to the expertise of the native Inuit who accompanied the group. Nickerson's account praises the efforts of the native woman Tookoolito. Her loyalty to the expedition leader, even after his death, kept her with a group of men from the *Polaris* that holed up on the drifting ice for eight months, even though she and her husband could have fended much better for themselves without the inexperienced and totally dependent foreigners to care for. Nickerson occasionally loses focus and wanders into personal musings, yet her book may be the first to shed light on this little-mentioned historical figure. Worth noting also is that Nickerson hypothesizes a different murderer than other *Polaris* accounts, though perhaps not as convincingly. Quick and worthwhile to read. Gavin Quinn Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved