ARCTIC

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DAVID DAMAS (1926 – 2010)

David Damas, eminent Arctic ethnologist and scholar of

comparative social organization.

Learning how Arctic peoples organized themselves and

how they lived their lives engaged David Damas during his graduate student days. Between August 1960 and August 1961, he undertook fieldwork in the Iglulik region of the Northwest Territories. At that time Inuit still dressed in furs, traveled by dog team, lived off the land, and periodically touched in at points of service. He traveled with them, researching Inuit kinship, social organization, and personality structure. David soon understood the harsh realities that Inuit coped

with daily, and he did not romanticize the lives of the people he worked with.

After his appointment as Arctic Ethnologist at the National Museum of Canada in 1962, David spent long periods of time in the Arctic. He spent a year investigating all-native and centralized communities in the Bathurst Inlet, Perry River, and Cambridge Bay areas, collecting information relevant to the reconstruction of aboriginal Copper Eskimo society. In 1965, he spent February to

August in the Gjoa Haven and Spence Bay regions, focusing on Netsilik society, and he also collected ethnographic data from extant all-native as well as mixed communities.