

# Nauyopee

and  
An Eskimo experiment in market research  
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I first heard about Nauyopee from a Scottish fisherman on the Isle of Iona. He was a native of Peterhead and he told me that there has been an Eskimo visitor there. According to his version this man had been piloting a whaler on the Baffin Coast when bad weather had made it impossible to put him ashore. He had sailed to Scotland, lived all winter with the Captain, and had been given a free pass to the local cinema. He appeared to be quite happy with this arrangement and had returned to Baffin Island the following summer. Such was the story, but as no one else seemed to have heard it, I thought the Scot may have been mistaken.

In the winter of 1956, I was travelling on the East coast of Baffin Island and near a spot named Kivitoo I was told of a man named Nauyopee who lived in a white man's house. I promptly concluded that he must be a trader - the Eskimo word for trader is "**Neeyavuptay**" - and when I had finished my business elsewhere, I went to see what sort of man he might be. He was no trader, rather his name meant "**Little Sea-gull**" and he was an Eskimo with a tale worth hearing.

It all seemed to stem from a certain Englishman, Hector J. Pitchforth, who appears to have arrived in Baffin Island in 1920. In a 56-page letter to his superiors in the Sabellum Trading Company in London, Pitchforth, in writing from Kivitoo, mentions that "The ship is taking home Nauyarik, a native of Kivitoo, consult him and take him around Harrod's and Whiteley's and show him a variety of things, he can advise you at first hand. I suggest you give him charge of the station at Kivitoo, he has lived there many years and is quiet, respectable and trustworthy".

Sitting in the shack hard by Pitchforth's little house, Nauyopee went through the story as he had done many times before. He told me the name of the ship was the ROSIE. She was a motor ketch out of Bideford and in the Chief Officer's Log for Thursday, 4 Sept.1924, which I saw in the library of Dartmouth College, is the entry, "Shipped Eskimo Nowyabing as ice-pilot".

This fits the story of my Scottish informant, though Nauyopee insists that he was intended to spend the winter in Britain, and Pitchforth's letter bears him out. Nauyopee said that he went every day to the Cinema, and that there were sometimes a policeman to keep back the throngs of curious Scots all anxious to view the distinguished visitor to their shores, and that on one occasion he did go down to London. Starting in the Eskimo tongue, but gradually including more English words as they came back to him, he described a tall tower, probably the Monument to the Fire of London. He climbed this tower and was shown the City. To the

South were houses, and houses, and so on round the points of the compass. And through the midst ran the river, and the masts of the ships packed almost solidly from shore to shore.

I asked if he had met anyone there who spoke Eskimo, and he said there was one, a Mr. Harley, but his memory seemed confused, and I may have been leading him astray. When he had come down the Monument (and he walked half a dozen times round the shack to indicate a spiral staircase, should I be unfamiliar with these things) he went to the Zoo. He had all the English names for the animals and he pantomimed each. When he imitated the walk of the Camel, I was overcome with laughter. The rest of the Eskimos present were not laughing, they were bored stiff for they had seen this same show at frequent intervals during the past thirty years. His narrative ended with his return to Kivitoo the following summer.

In the Log of the Rosie for that season, Nauyopee is not actually mentioned by name, and he might have returned by another ship of the same Company - I did not think to ask him about this. But there is an entry for Monday 31 August 1925, written offshore near Kivitoo, by the Master of the ROSIE. "If anchors hold, all is well - Meechiman and his Eskimo unable to get ashore, slept on board; I am grateful to have got into Signiyak yesterday afternoon with not an hour to spare. This is a wild night." Then an entry for Wednesday, 2 September, "Eskimo watchman took a bad turn, but could not get him ashore.." And on September 4 at 4.00 pm the same evening, "Wind eased, natives sent ashore taking sick Eskimo watchman with them".

Nauyopee was almost certainly this night-watchman, but if he had been sick he was in fine fettle when I met him in 1956. He had performed a fine service to his fellow Eskimos when the Distant Early Warning (DEW) Line construction began on the coast. To many natives this was most unsettling as they had never dreamed of such colossal piles of supplies, could see no reason for the whole operation, and thought that the end of their world had come. All material values and spiritual values were seemingly imperilled overnight, but the transition was eased by the testimony of old Nauyopee. Whatever new marvel the DEW Line might bring, Nauyopee was not impressed. This was nothing to London!

So ended the first experiment in Eskimo market research. The sending of an Eskimo to select trade goods at Harrod's never seems to have been repeated. The Sabellum Trading Company has disappeared, and Hector J. Pitchforth is dead and gone. He died alone and deserted in the dead of winter, and his body was sledged 450 miles to the RCMP post at Pond Inlet. The Ketch ROSIE is not to be found in Lloyd's List of Shipping. Even London is not what it once was, but at Kivitoo on the Baffin Coast, Nauyopee still lives in the house which Pitchforth built and remains a quiet, trustworthy, and respectable fellow.