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The Collapse of the Beothuk World: Ralph Pastore

The Beothuk-On the Eve of their Extinction: Donald H. Holly Jr.

In the above mentioned articles, we have historians making a revision as to what caused the demise of the Beothuk people of Newfoundland by 1829. It had been earlier recorded that the Beothuk people were a doomed people whose fate were out of their control and that they had been massively killed by the Europeans. However, a more detailed look into historical and archaeological data, shows that the Beothuk people were actively searching for ways to adapt to their ever changing situation (Holly Jr., Donald H. 2000. "THE BEOTHUK - ON THE EVE OF THEIR EXTINCTION." Artic Anthropology 37, No. 1, Pg. 79).

In the beginning, the Europeans were mainly interested in the fishing and whaling resources off the coast of Newfoundland. As the Europeans set up fishing and whaling operations, the Beothuk people were pushed from their traditional fishing grounds. Most devastating was the eventual expansion into the Interior Island bays and Inlets. Even the resources of Funk Island's rookeries were so over run by the Europeans that it caused the extinction of the "Great Auk". (Holly Jr., Donald H. 2000. "THE BEOTHUK - ON THE EVE OF THEIR EXTINCTION." Artic Anthropology 37, No. 1, Pg. 80-82). The Beothuk people did attack the fishing operations along the coast with loss of lives. However, this was a futile attempt as the Europeans had guns and they did not.

The Beothuk people responded to the Europeans in a manner unlike any other contact with Aboriginal people in Canada. First, there was a failure to set up any trading relationship between the Beothuk and the Europeans. There was no mutual benefit between the parties leading to a isolation of interests. Europeans did their own hunting and fishing, and the Beothuk salvaged abandoned fishing operations for any metals that they might have needed (Holly Jr., Donald H. 2000. "THE BEOTHUK - ON THE EVE OF THEIR EXTINCTION." Artic Anthropology 37, No. 1, Pg. 83) ; (Pastore, Ralph: "THE COLLAPSE OF THE BEOTHUK WORLD" Acadiensis 19, no 1 (1989) pg 56).

Ultimately, the Beothuk people retreated from the Europeans by moving into the interior of Newfoundland. This over time caused many hardships for the Beothuk people as the interior of Newfoundland was harsh, covered in rock and did not support a large animal population for hunting. Most large game, seals and caribou were seasonal and migratory, leaving large amounts of time with poor food resources. People became poorer and starvation was rampant. Over time, the population of the Beothuk people just dwindled.

Ultimately, the total isolation between the Europeans and the Beothuk could not be over come. Their were no missionaries, and no official administration to interact for the aboriginal people. Also, was the Beothuk's practice, according to the last Beothuk, Shanaudithit that anyone of their people living with white people where sacrificed upon their return to the band. (Holly Jr., Donald H. 2000. "THE BEOTHUK - ON THE EVE OF THEIR EXTINCTION." Artic Anthropology 37, No. 1, Pg. 84).

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