

Arctic Twilight: Leonard Budgell and Canada's Changing North

Claudia Coutu Radmore

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Leonard Budgell saw the Canadian North like nobody else. He put his observations into words as few others ever could.

As a "Servant of the Bay" Budgell ran Hudson's Bay Company trading posts for decades in isolated communities up the Labrador coast and across the Arctic. Living among aboriginal Canadians he witnessed episodes and heard stories that would never again be repeated - except he wrote them down. His pen memorably portrays everything from dancing northern lights and hunting practices of birds to astonishing human adventures and predicaments.

Northern ways intact for centuries changed with rifles and motorboats, radios and electric generators, new foods and different medicines. Most often, it was Budgell who bridged the aboriginal and southern cultures, building and operating remote radio stations at places like Hebron, taking an RCMP officer into a settlement where a choice had to be made between two different codes of law and behaviour in a murder case. In Arctic Twilight, Budgell chronicles, in an outpouring of letters to a much younger female friend, a traditional way of life that was changing forever.

Claudia Coutu Radmore, a teacher, writer, and artist, first met Len Budgell in Winnipeg when she was a fine arts student and he had retired from the Company. Their friendship grew stronger when he began writing remarkable letters after she returned to Queen's University. Now edited and organized by her, this unique memoir is available to the public for the first time.



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