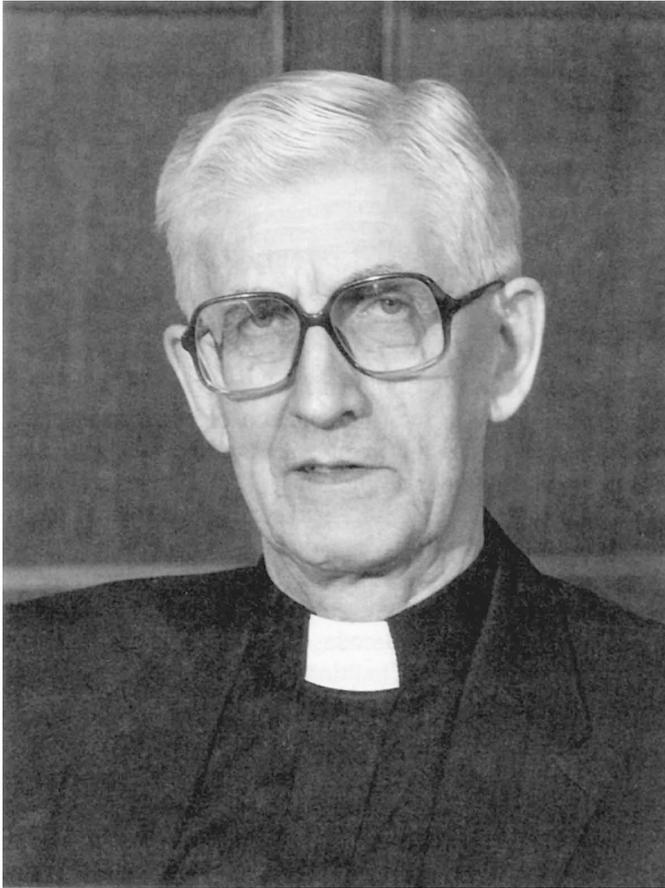


FATHER GUY MARY-ROUSSELIÈRE (1913–1994)



Father Mary-Rousselière in 1988. Photo by Jean Villeneuve.

Father Guy Mary-Rousselière was 81 when he died in a house fire in Pond Inlet in April. Born in Le Mans, France, Father Mary-Rousselière obtained a philosophy degree at the seminary of St. Sulpice, Paris in 1931, taking his first vows for the priesthood in the same year. He came to Canada a year after his ordination as an Oblate of Mary Immaculate in 1937, beginning his work with the Déné in northern Saskatchewan and Manitoba, and later ministering to the Inuit of Repulse, Pelly and Hudson Bays, and Baffin Island. He told me that his 56 years in the North, with 36 years at Pond Inlet, had been rewarding as a priest.

Father Mary-Rousselière was foremost a priest, but ever curious about the prehistory of the people he served. He learned much about Chipewyan and Inuit language and culture, later identifying their early tools and describing their past. He always acknowledged his sources and was deeply concerned about the damaging effects of southern influence. At Igloolik, Father Mary-Rousselière credited Monica Atagutalluk with stimulating him in archaeology. In *Les jeux de ficelle des Arviligjuarmiut* (1969), he emphasized string figures not as modern entertainment but as representing an earlier lifeway. In 1980, the Université de Montreal published *Qitdlarssuaq, l'histoire d'une migration polaire*, Father Mary-Rousselière's account of a nineteenth century journey by Inuit from Baffin Island to Greenland, retracing the trek made by their ancestors.

He was actively engaged in film-making, his first involvement being *Light in the Darkness*. Some of his photographs appeared in the *National Geographic* and other journals. While working with well-known filmmaker Asen Balikci on the Netsilik film series, Mary-Rousselière injured his arm. While undergoing physiotherapy he obtained his Master of Arts degree in anthropology at the University of Montreal. In 1953, he became editor of *Eskimo* magazine, a post he held for many years.

Father Mary-Rousselière's 1946 discovery of beach ridges of the ancient Dorset people just south of Igloolik and some distance inland suggested a lifeway and environment different from the present inhabitants. In the 1960s, he reported many interesting Dorset art pieces eroding from low coastal cliffs at Button Point near Pond Inlet. Emergency excavation was unknown at the time, but fortunately he collected at the site for many years as the bank subsided. One very important find was the Button Point mask which appeared as an illuminated backlit photograph on a 1971 cover of *artscanada* magazine. However, his most important site was Nunguvik where he excavated over the years, training students in arctic archaeology and adaptation.

Never have I seen such wonderful art and tools brought to the National Museum in Ottawa (now the Canadian Museum of Civilization) on such shoestring budgets. Each year I marvelled at his newest finds fresh from his black attaché case: miniature tools, menacing shamanistic figures and articulated dolls of wood. One year I saw a model of the earliest known skis of the Canadian Arctic. In subsequent years, exquisite harpoon heads, burin-like tools still attached by sinew to wood handles, and hafted chert carving knives were recovered. I teased him that such ongoing fragile but well preserved riches could only be the product of currently active artisans. I half expected a Dorset model of an outboard motor.

Father Mary-Rousselière gave of himself in many ways. Archaeologists Hans Muller-Beck and Susan Rowley, and archaeology students from other countries visited or worked at Nunguvik or Saatut. He helped me in my Barrenland research by identifying Oblate archives as early sources of birth dates for my seasonality studies. Mary-Rousselière was a member of the Northwest Territories Historic Sites and Monuments Board for many years. His long years of scholarly service in the Arctic were publicly acknowledged when the Honourable Bill McKnight, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, presented him with the Northern Science Award in 1988.

Seemingly aloof and reserved to some, perhaps a result of his habituation to lonely settlements, he was warm, generous, frugal with field funds, fair to all, introspective but also ready to enjoy a joke. For those of us who work in the Arctic, we have lost both a colleague and friend.

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