

Frederick W. Waugh (1872–1924)

Largely forgotten today, especially in the annals of northern science, Frederick Wilkerson Waugh was one of the very few Canadians to bridge the gap between amateur and professional anthropology during the discipline's transitional period in the early 20th century. Waugh was a self-taught ethnologist and natural historian, and his career with the Anthropological Division of the Geological Survey of Canada, founded in 1910, lasted a mere 11 years. Yet over that brief span, he made several original contributions to disciplinary knowledge of indigenous peoples and cultures, including research in Labrador among the northern Innu (Naskapi) and their Inuit neighbours.

Born on 4 April 1872 to George and Ellen (Vanderlip) Waugh, Frederick was raised, along with younger sister Susan, in the hamlet of Langford, Brant County, Ontario. Their father was a painter, but whether an artist, or artisan, is not known. Details of Waugh's formative years, including his education, are similarly vague, although his employment as a teacher on Manitoulin Island in the 1890s suggests that he may have attended normal school. It is more certain that his lifelong interest in Aboriginal customs and traditions was nurtured while growing up near the Six Nations reserve.

Waugh married Nancy Hutchinson in 1894. They had two children, Richard in 1897 and Reginald Goldwin eight years later. Census returns for 1901 indicate that sometime before that year, Waugh had given up teaching on Manitoulin Island and relocated to Toronto. There, the couple ran a boarding house. Rent must have been their main source of income since the census reported Waugh's occupation as "collector," a reference to his unpaid research in Brant County on behalf of the archaeological branch of the Ontario Provincial Museum. Plainly research was his true calling: he remained involved in various scholarly activities—among them, founding a folklore society in the city with fellow enthusiast, William Wintemberg—even after family finances prompted him to take a job editing trade journals. Then, late in 1911, he met with a break that changed his life's course: an offer from Edward Sapir, the Geological Survey's chief anthropologist, to study material culture at Six Nations. This offer led, two years later, to employment as the Survey's first ethnological preparator, a post that combined curatorial and research responsibilities. Waugh was 41 at the time, six years beyond the limit for hiring under Civil Service regulations, so his appointment required special approval of the Governor General in Council. His willingness to relocate his wife and sons to Ottawa for a job paying only three-quarters of his editor's salary attests to the man's aspiration to devote himself to documenting indigenous cultures and languages then thought to be verging on extinction (Waugh to E. Sapir, 5 November 1911; Foran, 1913).

Along with caring for rapidly growing ethnological collections housed in the Survey-affiliated Victoria Memorial



Left to right: F.W. Waugh, Mrs. David Barber [Barbour], Amos, and David Barber [Barbour], Nain, 1922. Canadian Museum of History 54755.

Museum, Waugh continued with Iroquoian research through the 1915 field season. Despite wartime stringency, the next year found him heading off in a different direction, making the first of three summertime expeditions into the Lake Superior hinterlands for fieldwork with northern Ojibwe. Following the last of these trips, in 1920, he took up yet a third project, one Sapir had proposed before the war, but was unable to bring to fruition until 1921: researching nomadic Innu hunters in northern Labrador. The assignment would not make him the first scientist to study this remote population. Credit for that belongs to Lucien Turner, a naturalist employed by the U.S. government as a weather observer at Fort Chimo, on Ungava Bay, from 1882 to 1884. But while Turner's primary responsibilities limited his ethnographic work to occasions when Innu (and Inuit) called at the post to trade, Waugh intended to take a different approach, accompanying a band into the interior at the start of the long winter season, and traveling with them over the ensuing months. In a period when anthropologists usually confined their fieldwork to reserves and settlements and focused on elders who remembered the old ways, his strategy promised to shed valuable light on what, at the time, was reputed to be among the continent's least acculturated groups.

Departing Ottawa in mid-June, Waugh headed for Voisey's Bay. He chose this location, rather than the more distant Fort Chimo, as the starting point for his expedition inland because he had learned from American adventurer William Cabot's 1912 memoir, *In Northern Labrador*, that a band of Innu visited there from time to time. Joining him was E.W. Calvert, an amateur ornithologist from London, Ontario, hired to cook and to help with a last-minute request from the Department of Interior for information on the region's birds and mammals (Corey, 1921). Detouring to St. John's in a (failed) bid to find an interpreter, Waugh instead engaged Herbert Pitcher to assist with the chores of wilderness camping and travel. On reaching their destination, by way of the nearby Inuit village of Nain, on 22 August, the trio found temporary lodging with John Voisey,

one of the bay's few permanent residents, and immediately set about acquiring clothing and other gear for the subarctic winter ahead. Before the day was out, Waugh also laid eyes on Innu for the first time, paying a call on two families belonging to the Barren Ground (or George River) band, now Mushuau Innu, who were encamped nearby. "They are sickly, poor-looking specimens," he remarked afterwards: nothing like the hearty, self-sufficient nomads he expected to find after reading Cabot's account (Cabot, 1912:189; Waugh, 1921–22: Vol. 1, 22 August 1921). Only later did he learn of the disastrous 1916 hunting season and resultant famine that had weakened the group's centuries-old independence of the coast and its traders, and of the scores who died of measles and small pox soon thereafter (Waugh, 1921–22: Vol. 1, 28 December 1921; 1925:129).

As Cabot had done previously, if always in summer, Waugh chose to move inland by following the Assiwaban River (now Ashuapun-shipu, but officially the Koraluk), expecting to cross paths with Innu en route to their hunting places beyond the height of land, in the valley of the George. In late autumn, word reached Ottawa that he had succeeded (Cabot, 1921). But the source of the news, Richard White, a fur trader at Nain, was mistaken: in fact, Waugh and company spent an uneventful two months only 30 miles or so upriver before returning to Voisey's Bay on 30 November, their time away rewarded with little more than copious observations of the area's flora and fauna. The Innu "...were avoiding me very carefully," he eventually learned, explaining to Sapir that they suspected "I had come to enforce [Newfoundland's] game law with regard to caribou." Having sorted out the misunderstanding, he thought he would try again, this time when the band headed inland in spring (Waugh to E. Sapir, 17 January 1922). Meanwhile, he attempted to work with those who visited the bay, but achieved less than middling results for his effort, in good part for want of an interpreter. "I had been using a couple of Indians who were very weak in English, which made it hard to do something," he reported, although now and then "I have done fairly well with an Indian [Tomas, from Ungava Bay] who speaks Eskimo;" "by conducting a 4-handed game" with the assistance of Amos Voisey, John's Inuttut-speaking brother (and Waugh's current landlord), "I managed to get some dope" (Waugh to E. Sapir, 17 January 1922; 1921–22: Vol. 3, 16 January 1922).

Occasional bright spots aside, overall the research proceeded erratically, and as winter wore on, Waugh grew increasingly frustrated with the people's transience—and worse, their frequent drunkenness. In consequence, what information he obtained was limited in scope and generally thin in substance, his notebooks weighted toward straightforward matters such as material culture, but nearly devoid of evidence—on social and intellectual life, for instance—that is necessarily derived from in-depth questioning. Skirting the problem in a letter to Survey director William McInnes (10 January 1922), he did allow that "I have also sandwiched in some Eskimo notes, when nothing else presented." Initially, the Voiseys, a family of mixed

Inuit-European background, were his main source, but Waugh gradually expanded his inquiries, first to other families scattered around the bay, and then, in late January, to villagers at Nain, where he spent a productive month working on a wide range of topics, including folklore. His most frequent informant was an elder named Old Harriet, aka Mrs. Deer, who was well-versed in traditional stories from her native Hebron. She spoke freely as long as the resident missionary was out of earshot: "Mrs Deer is afraid to talk before [Rev. Townley]," Waugh mused in his diary; "...I've got to do something strenuous soon. I may have to ask [him] to stay away" (Waugh, 1921–22: Vol. 3, 30 December 1922). This problem aside, conditions in Nain proved more conducive to research than had those in Voisey's Bay. In mid March, therefore, he opted to forego plans to follow the Innu inland in spring and returned to Nain instead, remaining there until he sailed for home in early August (Waugh, 1921–22: Vol. 3, 16 March 1922). Along with a rich body of ethnographic detail, a portion of it in the form of narratives taken down verbatim, his results also included 225 photographs, many depicting various aspects of daily life. By contrast, he managed to take only one-fifth as many photos of Innu subjects.

Despite its unforeseen outcome, Waugh's experience at Voisey's Bay did not deter him from undertaking a second, if more conventional, stint of Innu fieldwork. With his son Goldwin as company, he passed the summer of 1924 on a reserve at Sept Îles, in southern Innu (Montagnais) territory. "I have had good luck in the matter of informants so far," he told Sapir. "I have had one man for some days who came just a few years ago from Fort Chimo, so I am getting some good material from that region. I have also gotten considerable for the region of Seven Islands" (Waugh to E. Sapir, 18 July 1924). But a season that had gone well came to a mysterious end. En route to Ottawa in late September, Waugh sent Goldwin on ahead while he stopped at Kahnawake, the Mohawk reserve near Montreal, to acquire artefacts for the museum. And with that, the man vanished, never to be seen or heard from again. RCMP and Geological Survey investigations failed to solve the case, although his Survey colleague, Diamond Jenness, speculated that Waugh fell from the Lachine railway bridge while attempting to reach the island of Montreal (Department of Mines, 1924; Jenness, 1924:2). He was 52.

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