

310 words, column #4
Java Talk
(for May 17 to May 23, 2007)

Every Age Is The Best Age

Arnarluk's Story

In some cultures, stories are told during the long, dark winter months, by storytellers like Arnarluk, an Inuit elder, who told a traditional creation story to anthropologist, Knud Rasmussen, during his Thule Expedition, in 1921. He carefully recorded her Inuktitut words and then translated them into his own Danish language. From this, the story was translated into English.

Arnarluk's story is about a time when people didn't know how to die, so everyone grew very old. It got too crowded, but "then a mighty flood came." Also, it was always dark. "Now the people were fewer, two old women began to talk. 'Let us be without day,' one of them said, 'if at the same time we may be without death!' 'No,' said the other one, 'we will have both light and death.' And as the old woman had spoken these words, so it came to pass. Light came, and joy and death. It is told that when the first man died the corpse was covered with stones but the corpse returned--it did not understand quite how to die. It put its head up from the stones, wanting to get up. But an old woman pushed it back again. 'We have sufficient to drag and our sledges are small,' she said. For they were on the point of breaking camp to go hunting. So the dead man had to return to his mound of stones." Arnarluk ended her story by saying, "And with death came the sun, the moon, and the stars. For when the people die they rise to the sky and become radiant."

In Victoria, all types of stories are told and listened to, from September to June, at "Stories at Fern." This month's gathering is on Monday, May 21, 2007 (Victoria Day), from 7:15 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. at 1831 Fern Street. (Adults \$5, Students \$3).

Deidre Hill