Sadie Brower Neakok: An Inupiaq Woman

By Margaret B. Blackman


This is the life history of the daughter of Asianggataq, an Eskimo woman, and her husband Charles Bower, the first white settler in Alaska's northernmost community of Barrow. One of ten children, Sadie Brower was raised with a mixture of Inupiat and white traditions. Sent Outside for modern schooling, she returned to Barrow to use her education on behalf of her people. Now in her seventies, she has devoted a lifetime to public service, first as a Bureau of Indian Affairs schoolteacher, then as a health aide, a foster parent, a welfare worker, and, for twenty years, as Barrow's magistrate. She became a key figure in the introduction of the American legal system to Bush Alaska as well as an outspoken advocate for people, eventually winning the right for the native language to be the language of the court in cases where the defendants could not speak English. Equally important, in private life she has borne thirteen children as wife to Nate Neakok, an Inupiaq hunter and whaling captain who, she states emphatically, never went to school, but knew more than I did.

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