ART AND ARCTIC SOVEREIGNTY:
A.Y. JACKSON, LAWREN S. HARRIS AND CANADA’S EASTERN
ARCTIC PATROLS

by

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Abstract

In 1930, A.Y. Jackson and Lawren S. Harris travelled to the Arctic Archipelago as members of Canada’s Eastern Arctic Patrol. The collaborative venture between the Department of the Interior and the noted Group of Seven artists, which followed Jackson’s 1927 voyage aboard the government patrol, was part of a mutual aim to generate popular interest in the Canadian North through art. This thesis examines the underlying political context of both the 1927 and 1930 collaborative efforts. It examines the government patrols in connection with the promotion of Jackson’s and Harris’s Arctic works as part of a larger process of advancing the Arctic as a Canadian possession during a period of increased foreign interest in the region. Drawing on primary source material as well as various print media reports and exhibition reviews, this study provides insight into how the contemporary framing of Jackson’s and Harris’s Arctic sketches and paintings from the government-supported expeditions—the ways in which the works were discussed and understood—contributed not only to the “imagining” of the Arctic as a Canadian possession, but also to the dissemination of Canadian sovereignty efforts in the North.
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Chapter 1

Introduction: An Issue of Sovereignty

I shall endeavor to show you gentlemen that these seven men who formed themselves into a group for the ostensible purpose of painting, are not painters at all... These men, sir, are not painters at all. They are politicians. I do not mean that they are Conservatives or Liberals. I mean, sir, that in the broadest possible sense these men are world-politicians...

- “Skit Lecture on Jackson and Banting Painting Trip to Arctic,” 1927-1931

I think we can put the Canadian Arctic on the map pretty definitely. We might even hold an exhibition in New York. It would be a very artistic way of letting the Americans know it is ours.

- A.Y. Jackson to Vincent Massey, 31 May 1930

On 1 August 1930, A.Y. Jackson and Lawren S. Harris embarked on a fifty-nine-day sketching expedition to the Arctic Archipelago as members of Canada’s Eastern Arctic Patrol. The collaborative venture between the Department of the Interior and the noted Group of Seven artists, which followed Jackson’s 1927 government-sponsored Arctic sketching voyage aboard the S.S. Beothic with insulin co-discoverer and amateur artist Dr. Frederick Banting, was part of a mutual effort to generate popular interest in “the Canadian North” through “a graphic impression” of the region. Yet, as Jackson suggests in a letter to Vincent Massey, Canada’s Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to the United States, these efforts were more than merely an artistic

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1 Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, Banting Papers, MS Coll 76, Box 28B, Journals of painting trips, 1927-1931, author unknown, n.d., 2.
2 University of Toronto Archives, Vincent Massey Papers, B1987-0082, box 6.
venture to popularize the North, but were also part of a larger process of advancing the Arctic as a Canadian possession.

As historian William R. Morrison asserts, “Canada has historically had two kinds of sovereignty” in the Arctic—what he describes as “concrete sovereignty,” the assertion of sovereignty through direct administrative control, and “symbolic sovereignty,” the emblematic and abstract means of conveying control. Drawing on Morrison’s concept of symbolic sovereignty, I propose to examine Jackson and Harris’s participation in the government patrols in connection with the promotion of their Arctic works to discuss what I call “the visual culture of Arctic sovereignty.” As I contend, the contemporary framing of Jackson’s and Harris’s Arctic sketches and paintings from the 1927 and 1930 government-supported expeditions—the ways in which the works were discussed and understood—contributed not only to the “imagining” of the Arctic as a Canadian possession, but also to the dissemination of Canadian sovereignty efforts in the North.

Both Jackson and Harris travelled aboard the patrols during a period of increasing interest by the Canadian government in the Arctic Archipelago. Although transferred from British to Canadian jurisdiction in 1880, Canada’s renewed interest in the Arctic

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4 W.R. Morrison attributes the concept of developmental sovereignty to his colleague Kenneth S. Coates. Morrison explains that concrete, or developmental sovereignty, is the assertion of sovereignty through direct and active administrative control and “occurs when the government formulates a policy for the development of a territory under its control.” This is also described as the “practical” form of sovereignty and is “real and unquestioned.” The other form of sovereignty—symbolic sovereignty—is described as a more emblematic and abstract means of conveying control of a territory, which Morrison explains are “a series of gestures, demonstrations and other actions” that are used to demonstrate a nation’s presence in a region. Morrison explains that although certain forms of symbolic sovereignty fulfill the requirements of laying claims to a territory under international law on the basis of “occupation” and “discovery,” symbolic sovereignty is viewed as little more than a gesture of “showing the flag”; William R. Morrison, Showing the Flag: The Mounted Police and Canadian Sovereignty in the North, 1894-1925 (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1985), 1-2; Ken S. Coates and W.R. Morrison, “Northern Visions: Recent Developments in the Writing of Northern Canadian History,” Manitoba History no. 10 (Autumn 1985). For additional discussion of the concept of symbolic and developmental sovereignty see William M. Morrison, “Canadian Sovereignty and the Inuit of the Central and Eastern Arctic,” Études/Inuit Studies 10, no. 1-2 (1986): 246-247; Ken S. Coates, P. Whitney Lackenbauer, William R. Morrison, Greg Poelzer, Arctic Front: Defending Canada in the Far North (Toronto: Thomas Allen Publishers, 2010), 27.
islands was largely the result of increased foreign activity in the Eastern Arctic during the 1920s. Mounting concerns over a series of foreign exploratory parties in the region and their apparent disregard for Canadian jurisdiction over the islands, sparked fears that Canada faced an imminent challenge to its northern claims, prompting the Canadian government to take an assertive role in the North.\(^5\)

Established by the Department of the Interior in 1922, the Eastern Arctic Patrols were an attempt by the government to assert control over the Arctic islands and to establish a more visible and sustained Canadian presence in the region. A 1927 report published by the Department described the annual patrols to the Eastern Arctic as a means “to reprovision the Government posts; to establish new posts when necessary; and to convey the officers of the various Departments who are detailed for duty in that area” (fig. 1).\(^6\)

While these efforts provided a more effective means of establishing Canada’s title to the islands through the acts of occupation and settlement in the region, the Department was also eager to document its northern efforts as well. Thus, during this time, the Department established a practice of visually documenting its activities during the patrols using film and photography. As historian Peter Geller discusses, these Arctic images served “as a valuable record of the year’s expedition, providing a way to broadcast the

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\(^5\) Recent foreign activity in the Arctic lays bare the fact that Canada’s claims are still not secure to this day, with Russia, the United States and Denmark eager to challenge certain claims to the Arctic region. In 2007, Russia planted a flag at the North Pole, and disagreements between the circumpolar nations concerning the Northwest Passage and ownership of the polar seabed persist. See Coates, Lackenbauer, Morrison, Poelzer, *Arctic Front*, 1-8, 9.

\(^6\) Department of the Interior, *Canada’s Arctic Islands: Canadian Expeditions 1922-23-24-25-26* (Ottawa: F.A. Acland, Printer to the King’s Most Excellent Majesty, 1927), 4.
Figure 1. Canadian Government Arctic Expedition 1926, Island in Bache Peninsula, Ellesmere Island First Party
NWT Archives/N-1979-006-0009

NWTYB’s [Northwest Territories and Yukon Branch’s] activities to fellow bureaucrats and their elected employers.”

However, because these images were primarily used for departmental publications and educational purposes, they had very little impact on the public. Therefore, the Department sought new ways to engage the public in the imagining of the Canadian North. This thesis seeks to examine and explain how Jackson’s and Harris’s Arctic works helped establish the Arctic as a Canadian possession in the public mind.

Although the issue of sovereignty is the obvious starting point for my discussion, an examination of existing literature on the artists reveals the paucity of scholarship on

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7 Peter Geller explains that although some members of the government were interested in distributing the films through general release, it was determined that the films had little publicity value. Thus, the images were primarily used for departmental publications and educational purposes; Peter Geller, *Northern Exposures: Photographing and Filming the Canadian North, 1920-45* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), 40-46.
Jackson’s and Harris’s Arctic ventures. While certainly their Arctic sketching excursions and subsequent art works are noted in countless biographical studies of the artists, and in the annals of Canadian art history, including seminal texts such as J. Russell Harper’s *Painting in Canada: a history* (originally published in 1966), and Dennis Reid’s *A Concise History of Canadian Painting* (originally published in 1973), the majority of accounts provide only a cursory discussion of the artists’ Arctic forays within their large oeuvre, and have often failed to acknowledge the nature and extent of Jackson and Harris’s participation in the Arctic patrols.

Among the more detailed scholarly discussions on both the 1927 and 1930 Arctic sketching expeditions and subsequent works are found in Peter Mellen’s *The Group of Seven* (1970), and Jeremy Adamson’s *Lawren S. Harris: Urban Scenes and Wilderness Landscapes, 1906-1930* (1978). However, both authors’ accounts are primarily an examination of the artists’ Arctic sketches and paintings, and offer very little insight into the particular circumstances and motivations behind the artists’ Arctic sketching ventures. While Mellen, for instance, explains that the artists were provided accommodation aboard the *Beothic*, which he notes “was chartered annually by the

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8 Surprisingly, there is a dearth of literature on Jackson’s and Harris’s Arctic ventures. Jackson’s illustrated book *The Far North* (1928), and Naomi Jackson Groves’ *A.Y. Jackson: The Arctic 1927* (1982), are chronicles of Jackson’s 1927 Arctic voyage, and are, at present, the only full accounts that have been written on either of the Arctic sketching expeditions and subsequent art works.

9 Peter Larisey’s *Light for a Cold Land: Lawren Harris’s Work and Life – An Interpretation* (Toronto & Oxford: Dundurn Press, 1993), and Christopher Jackson’s *Lawren Harris North By West: The Arctic and Rocky Mountain Paintings of Lawren Harris 1924-1931* (Calgary: Glenbow Museum, 1991), also discuss Harris and his 1930 Arctic venture and Arctic works, but provide little detail about the 1927 expedition or Jackson. A recent biography on A.Y. Jackson written by journalist Wayne Larsen, entitled *A.Y. Jackson: The Life of a Landscape Painter* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2009), devotes considerable attention to both Jackson’s 1927 and 1930 Arctic sketching trips in his book. However, Larsen’s account is primarily a recapitulation of Jackson’s Arctic journeys as discussed in Jackson’s *The Far North*, and *A Painter’s Country* (1958); and in Naomi Jackson Groves’ *A.Y. Jackson: The Arctic 1927*, and *A. Y.’s Canada: Drawings by A.Y. Jackson* (1968). For the purpose of this study, I have determined that Larsen’s book, despite providing a commendably detailed account of the artists’ Arctic ventures, ultimately does not add to our understanding of the political underpinnings behind Jackson’s (and Harris’s) Arctic expeditions and subsequent art works.
Canadian government to deliver supplies, relief officers, and assorted scientists to the R.C.M.P. posts in the far north,” he stops short of delving any deeper into the political context behind the artists’ government sponsored trips.\(^{10}\) Instead, Mellen directs his discussion toward a formal analysis of several of Jackson’s and Harris’s Arctic works, neglecting the larger context and purpose of the artists’ sketching ventures.

Adamson provides additional contextual information on the artists’ participation in government patrols in his biographical study of Harris. As he explains, Harris and Jackson “were invited to accompany the Canadian government supply ship *Beothic* on its annual voyage to the Arctic” as a result of Jackson and Banting’s 1927 successful stint as members of the “ship’s crew.”\(^ {11}\) However, Adamson also offers little insight into the nature of the collaborative efforts. Like Mellen, Adamson directs his discussion toward the artists’ sketches and paintings (primarily Harris’s), and ultimately fails to go beyond a formal analysis of the Arctic works.

While it can be understood that study to date of Jackson’s and Harris’s Arctic ventures has been limited in scope, there are a few scholars who have recognized the political underpinnings of the artists’ Arctic trips. As keenly noted by Lynda Jessup in her doctoral dissertation entitled “Canadian Artists, Railways, the State and the ‘Business of Becoming a Nation’ ” (1992); Mark Kristmanson in his doctoral dissertation “Plateaus of Freedom: Nationality, Culture and State Security in Canada, 1927-1957” (1999); and more recently by Janice Cavell and Jeff Noakes in their book *Acts of Occupation: Canada and Arctic Sovereignty, 1918-1925* (2010), both Jackson’s and Harris’s trips


aboard the government patrols were in fact part of a larger effort to draw public attention to the Arctic and Canadian northern activities. Although these aforementioned authors’ accounts of the 1927 and 1930 Arctic expeditions are incidental to the main discussion of their individual studies, and as a result do not delve into deeper analysis, these authors’ brief observations do highlight the complexities of the Arctic ventures and provide a useful framework for this study.

This thesis ultimately discusses the underlying political context of the Arctic sketching expeditions and subsequent art works, with less weight placed on formal analysis. Drawing on primary source material as well as various print media reports and exhibition reviews, my aim is to provide a more detailed discussion and understanding of both the 1927 and 1930 collaborative ventures. While this thesis does not pretend to be comprehensive—I have deliberately omitted a discussion of the Inuit and Inughuit populations as the subject is too vast to cover in this paper—I do provide an extensive discussion of the artists’ involvement in Canadian northern efforts of the time.

In order to examine the nature and extent of the artists’ Arctic ventures, a chapter is devoted to each expedition. Chapter 2 discusses the basis of the collaborative venture and examines Jackson and the Department’s efforts to publicize the Canadian North through art. Chapter 3 further examines the political underpinnings of the collaborative efforts. It addresses how Jackson and Harris’s works and subsequent exhibitions helped further advance the Canadian North. The conclusion, found at the end of chapter 3, summarizes the larger context of the collaborative efforts. Together, these chapters provide a chronological and contextual examination of Jackson’s and Harris’s Arctic expeditions, and of their participation in Canadian northern sovereignty efforts.
Chapter 2

Toward Visualizing the Canadian North: 1927 Arctic Expedition

A few days ago I had the pleasure of meeting Mr. O.S. Finnie and discussing with him the possibility of including an artist on the personnel of the next expedition to the Arctic. If there is a possibility I would like to very much go not from mere curiosity nor as a commercial venture but with the conviction that an artist’s interpretation of the country would be of general interest and would give a graphic impression of a part of Canada that has been held through patient and heroic endeavor.

I think it possible to make a series of drawings and studies around the various posts which might be used in any government publication. I would also attempt to paint a canvas of the most northerly post in Canada to present to the Archives, The National Gallery or whichever department you might suggest.

- A.Y. Jackson to Charles Stewart, Minister of the Interior, 17 April 1927

By early May, a decision had been made to accommodate Jackson aboard the SS Beothic’s 1927 Arctic expedition. Oswald Sterling Finnie, Director of Canada’s Northwest Territories and Yukon Branch of the Department of the Interior, informed Jackson that although he would have to pay his own expenses to and from North Sydney Harbour, Nova Scotia, he would “be put to no expense for accommodation on the ship.”

It was expected, however, that he would make available to the Department some drawings for any future government publication as required, as well as “a canvas of the

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12 LAC, Northern Affairs Program, RG 85, vol. 12, file 20, A.Y. Jackson.
13 LAC, Northern Affairs Program, RG 85, vol. 12, file 20, A.Y. Jackson, O.S. Finnie to Jackson, 6 May 1927.
most northerly post in Canada” to be presented to “the Archives, the National Gallery or any other department the Minister might suggest.”

Underpinning the Department’s desire to promote Jackson’s Arctic works was the idea that the art works could generate popular interest in the Arctic and engage the public in Canadian sovereignty efforts in the Far North. Finnie, who would become a key figure in both the 1927 and 1930 collaborative ventures, and who was a vigorous supporter of Jackson’s quest to produce “a graphic impression” of the Arctic, subscribed to the general consensus among his colleagues that “sketches or paintings by a noted Canadian artist of landscapes in Canada’s Archipelago, hung as they probably would be, in National Galleries,” were “an excellent opportunity to secure publicity” with regard to their “Northern work.” As Finnie surmised, “So far as I know, there has been no artist in the North in former times and a picture from that country will be something new in the realm of Art.” While not entirely true—a number of British and American artists had already travelled to the Arctic and painted the region—Jackson would indeed be considered “the first professional Canadian artist” to go to the far north and visualize the region, consequently marking a new milestone “in the realm” of Canadian art.

14 LAC, Northern Affairs Program, RG 85, vol. 12, file 20, A.Y. Jackson, Finnie to Jackson, 6 May 1927.
16 LAC, Northern Affairs Program, RG 85, vol. 12, file 20, A.Y. Jackson, Finnie to James Lawler, 9 May 1927.
17 Although Jackson has been identified as “the first professional Canadian artist” to paint in the Arctic, Richard Finnie explains in his book, Canada Moves North, that “as late as 1908 a Canadian Government Arctic Expedition had its official artist to supplement the photographs that were to be taken. The artist was only fourteen years old; but he was talented, and the sketches he brought back were somewhat better than the photographs that his seniors had to offer. He was Frank Hennessey, who became one of Canada’s best artists and the foremost contemporary pastelist”; Richard Finnie, Canada Moves North (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1942), 206. For a reference to Jackson as “the first professional Canadian artist” see Naomi Jackson Groves, A.Y. Jackson: The Arctic 1927 (Moonbeam, Ontario: Penumbra Press, 1982), n.p. For a list of the various artists who painted in the Arctic see also J. Russell Harper, Painting in Canada: a history (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), 131-135. An American contemporary of Jackson,
Although the idea of employing artistic images of the Arctic by a noted Canadian artist was considered a novel means to engage the public and draw attention to Canadian sovereignty efforts in the North (Dr. Frederick Banting would also accompany Jackson on the sketching expedition, adding to the publicity that year), the process of employing images for promotional aims was not new to Jackson. Having already “painted Canada from east to west generally” on various government-sponsored sketching expeditions by rail, Jackson’s offer to paint “the most northerly post in Canada” was part of the Group’s ongoing quest to pictorialize the nation and “interpret its many aspects,” in promotion of a national culture. To Jackson, the prospect of painting Canada’s North was not only an opportunity to lend expression to a region that was still relatively unfamiliar to Canadians, but an opportunity to define it as “unique and distinctly Canadian,” as he proclaimed.

As accounts concerning the 1927 Arctic sketching expedition and Jackson’s subsequent works and exhibitions reveal, efforts to promote the Arctic contributed as much to the discourse of Canadian art as it did to governmental activities that year. However, it can be understood that the 1927 collaborative venture between Jackson and the Department was based on a mutual aim of defining and advancing the region as distinctly Canadian to the public, and was ultimately part of a larger process of imagining the Arctic as a Canadian possession.

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Rockwell Kent, painted Alaska in 1918-1919, and would later go on to paint Greenland in the late 1920s and early 1930s.


A press account heralding Jackson’s “bold venture” to the Arctic aptly noted that it was “just one more indication of the fact that the eyes of Canadians are now turned northward.”20 As the account in the Winnipeg Free Press observed, the accommodation of a noted Canadian artist aboard a forthcoming government patrol was a harbinger of Canadians’ “new attitude… in general toward their vast domain in the north.”21

Indeed, up until 1925 very little had been done by the Canadian government to publicize Canadian activities in the North, in fear that it may “provoke pre-emptive action by the Danish and American governments.”22 Although the Department certainly had an established practice of visually documenting Arctic activities using film and photography, the images were primarily used for departmental publications and educational purposes and had very little impact on the wider public.23 However, in the weeks leading up to the Beothic’s departure on 16 July 1927, the novelty of Jackson travelling among the personnel of scientists and Royal Canadian Mounted Police drew considerable attention to the forthcoming government expedition. As an article in the Mail and Empire noted, “For the first time the staff includes an artist”:

Hitherto no artist, as such, has visited the Far North, but this year, Mr. A. Y. Jackson, R.C.A., Toronto, a number of whose canvasses hang in the National Gallery in Ottawa, will accompany the annual expedition of the North-West Territories

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21 Ibid.
22 Historians Janice Cavell and Jeff Noakes explain that before the Eastern Arctic Patrol set out in 1922, “the government sought to keep its plans secret, fearing that early publicity might provoke pre-emptive action by the Danish or American governments.” However, up until 1925, the patrols continued to keep “a low public profile” in order not to attract “too much public attention” to the region. It was only after 1925 that “stories and photographs in newspapers and magazines were used to establish the fact of Canada’s northern sovereignty in the public mind”; Janice Cavell and Jeff Noakes, Acts of Occupation: Canada and Arctic Sovereignty, 1918-25 (Vancouver and Toronto: UBC Press, 2010), 7, 250.
Jackson would not be the only one to travel and paint in the Arctic during the expedition that year. Accompanying Jackson in his quest to paint the “heroic landscape” of the Canadian North, and adding to the publicity, was noted insulin co-discoverer Dr. Frederick Banting, who made a last-minute bid to join the expedition. Although initially there had been media speculation that Banting had been invited by the Canadian government to conduct research on “the Eskimos and their diseases,” in reality, Banting had first heard about the Arctic expedition through Jackson, with whom he had formed a close friendship in 1926. In addition to being a doctor, Banting was an avid amateur artist, who had become quite proficient under the tutelage of Jackson. Having recently accompanied Jackson on a sketching expedition to Quebec in March 1927, Banting saw the Arctic trip as an exciting opportunity to sketch with Jackson once again.

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24 “Call of the North Strong This Year,” Mail and Empire (Toronto), 11 July 1927. The newspaper article cited from the Department of the Interior report, “Activity in Canadian Arctic This Summer,” Natural Resources Canada 6, no.7 (July, 1927): 4.


27 Banting’s first exhibit as an amateur artist was in 1925, at the University of Toronto’s Hart House Sketch Club. Jackson thought that, although Banting “might not have been a distinguished painter,” his works “weren’t bad at all.” Apart from science, painting was Banting’s “chief preoccupation,” and it was his wish to retire at fifty and devote his time to painting. See LAC, Naomi Jackson Groves Fonds, MG30-D351, vol. 98, file 17, CBC Talk on Banting 1943, 22 February 1943, 1; LAC, Naomi Jackson Groves Fonds, MG30-D351, vol. 98, file 11, Text of a Talk by A.Y. Jackson re: Frederick Banting, n.d., 32. See also LAC, Naomi Jackson Groves Fonds, MG30-D351, vol. 98, file 5, Note on the Arctic, n.d.

28 A.Y. Jackson, Banting as an Artist (With a Memoir by Frederick W.W. Hipwell) (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1943), 12.
recalled, Banting “got terribly excited” when he had mentioned the trip, and thus made an effort to secure his own passage aboard the expedition.29

A month before the trip, Banting sought the assistance of Harry Orr McCurry, Assistant Director of the National Gallery, regarding the possibility of travelling with Jackson on the 1927 government expedition. McCurry explained to Banting that he broached the subject with Finnie, was told that there was no room to take Banting on that year’s patrol, and advised him to write to Finnie himself to ask if he could possibly go the following year in the capacity of a medical officer instead.30 In actual fact, the Department was apprehensive about accommodating a celebrated physician under the rather crude conditions of the supply ship and had decided to politely turn him down. (Jackson, who was accustomed to travelling, camping and sketching en plein air during the Group’s various “cross-Canada” expeditions, would later admit that the Beothic “was no luxury liner.”31)

However, determined to travel with Jackson that year, Banting wrote directly to Finnie on 5 July, with just a little over a week to go before the Beothic was to leave for the Arctic.32 Finnie left a vague reply that although they had a medical doctor (Dr. Herschel Stringer was appointed as medical officer that year), he believed that there might be some room to accommodate Banting as a “guest” of the Department.33 In the meantime, Finnie floated the idea to G.P. Mackenzie, officer in charge of the expedition,

30 Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, Banting Papers, MS Coll 76, Scrapbook 1, H.O. McCurry to Frederick Banting, 14 June 1927, 145.
31 Jackson, A Painter’s Country, 94.
32 LAC, Northern Affairs Program, RG85, vol. 778, file 5713, Sir Frederick Banting, Frederick Banting to Finnie, 5 July 1927.
33 LAC, Northern Affairs Program, RG85, vol. 778, file 5713, Sir Frederick Banting, Finnie to Banting, 7 July 1927.
who was still reluctant to include Banting on a sketching voyage. As Mackenzie stated to Finnie in a wired telegram, “If Department want Banting to go will make arrangements stop If in interest of science we should take him otherwise no…”34 It was decided later that day, however, to grant Banting permission to travel aboard the expedition. “Can offer nothing luxurious,” Finnie explained to Banting. “If you are prepared to face the hazards of the north and assume the responsibility Department will be glad to have you.”35

While correspondence reveals that Finnie expected Jackson and Banting’s trip aboard the expedition to be “a pleasant and profitable one—both for themselves and for the Department,” details behind the sudden decision to include Banting as a guest on the roster of personnel are unknown.36 Banting’s presence did, however, add to the publicity surrounding the expedition, and was likely a motivating factor in including the celebrated Canadian aboard the patrol. Speculation regarding Banting’s sudden departure to the Arctic was soon replaced with interest in the forthcoming sketching expedition, after it was discovered that he “was taking his paints along, and expected to ply his brushes in the company of Mr. A.Y. Jackson.”37 Describing Banting’s developing skill in art and his most recent painting expedition with Jackson in Quebec, an account in the Toronto Daily Star excitedly proclaimed, “No better setting for Jackson and Banting could be imagined than the Arctic for their strong virile style, with bright color laid on thickly and boldly.”38

34 LAC, Northern Affairs Program, RG85, vol. 778, file 5713, Sir Frederick Banting, Mackenzie to Finnie, 9 July 1927.
35 LAC, Northern Affairs Program, RG85, vol. 778, file 5713, Sir Frederick Banting, Finnie to Banting, 9 July 1927.
38 Ibid.
Before Jackson and Banting set out for the Arctic on 16 July, Jackson told reporters,

The reason why I am going to paint in the far north is because I think the ordinary pastoral painting, as practiced now, is a dead letter. New art forms are necessary if the artist would develop. I think I will find new art values in the far north…

There is a country to the north of us which is unique and distinctly Canadian. Let our artists turn explorers; let them go up into this territory and interpret it for Canadians.39

Jackson’s idea of finding “new art values” in the Arctic landscape was firmly rooted in the Group’s early assertion “that an Art must grow and flower in the land before the country will be a real home for its people.”40 In particular, the Group’s documentation of regional landscapes across Canada was part of a larger process of defining the nation through its distinct indigenous characteristics from which they derived creative inspiration, and Jackson’s foray into Arctic territory was no exception. To Jackson, the Arctic landscape was not only a means to seek “[f]resh inspiration and freedom from convention to develop individuality in Canadian art,” as he explained to the reporters, but was also the place where “Canadian consciousness” could be discovered “through painting.”41

Yet translating the Group’s already established wilderness landscape idiom into the farthest reaches of Canada’s North proved to be a challenge. Although Jackson claimed that his “journey to the North was a great adventure” and delighted in the camaraderie that developed among the lively company of men, many of the daily journal

entries that he kept during the almost two month voyage, reveal the difficulties that he and Banting encountered while sketching in what he referred to as “[t]he friendly Arctic—rain, wind and fog.”

Just two weeks after the ship left Sydney, Nova Scotia, Jackson wrote to his friends, Fred and Bess Housser, “Art is some problem. There is no end of stuff, but everything is moving. [T]he ship, the ice, and then to make it worse, there is nearly always fog hanging round. You have to make a stab at it by either making a drawing or else taking the whole landscape and memorizing the effect.” He later reiterated similar sentiments to the _Canadian Forum:_

Fog impeded navigation and made sketching impossible at times, making sketches from a steamer moving at ten knots and hour, and the subject matter a complex of mountains and glaciers, was rather a problem. We were becoming expert in sketching from a moving object, but when the subject was moving too, such as ice floes and icebergs with wind and tide, then the problem became involved. A bank of fog would often mercifully put an end to our suffering.

While Jackson customarily made a prodigious number of both drawings and oil sketches during his sketching excursions, as he and Banting discovered, various climatic and geographical conditions made it more conducive to draw rather than to paint in the Arctic. “I have quite a collection of pen drawings,” Jackson explained to the Houssers. “There is more to draw than to paint, or it is more possible to draw, as everything is on

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42 LAC, Naomi Jackson Groves Fonds, MG30-D351, vol. 97, A.Y. Jackson Diary 1927 file, diary entry by A.Y. Jackson, 10 August 1927. Jackson’s niece explained that he kept two journals—one for personal “jottings;” the other was a more detailed account for his friends Fred and Bess Housser. See Jackson Groves, _A.Y. Jackson: The Arctic 1927_, n.p. Jackson’s sarcastic comment “The Friendly Arctic” most likely was referring to Vilhjalmur Stefansson’s well-known, but highly romanticized book _The Friendly Arctic: The Story of Five Years in the Polar Region_, which was released in 1921.


As a result, the majority of images produced by Jackson during the trip were of drawings both in pencil (using black graphite and conté crayon) and in pen and ink. His first attempt at “northern scenery” such as Icebergs (fig. 2), which he sketched en route to the patrol’s first call at Godhavn, Greenland, where Canadian personnel were to exchange “courtesies with the resident Danish officials,” reveals how drawing enabled him to quickly sketch several images of the moving objects in rapid succession. The use of abbreviations for colours and tones would later serve as notes when he worked up some of his drawings into oil sketches in his cabin. Banting, who worked closely alongside Jackson and often mirrored Jackson’s works throughout the voyage, made several of his own sketches of icebergs on the way to Godhavn, such as the untitled piece that he drew with Jackson and had later worked into a pen and ink drawing (fig. 3).

Drawing also helped facilitate the quick studies that the artists made during their brief stops ashore (figs. 4-5). As Jackson noted, “[t]here was such a lot to see, going around with sketch books all the time,” and the portability of a sketchbook enabled the

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46 Jackson’s niece Naomi Jackson Groves noted that he produced drawings in the “dozens”; however, he also produced forty sketches in oils and six canvases. Jackson Groves, A.Y. Jackson: The Arctic, n.p.
47 Jackson and Banting first noticed the icebergs off the northern coast of Newfoundland; see LAC, Naomi Jackson Groves Fonds, MG30-D351, vol. 97, A.Y. Jackson Diary 1927 file, diary entry by A.Y. Jackson, 18 July 1927. For reference on their stopover at Godhavn, Greenland see “Expedition Anchored in Greenland Harbor,” Mail and Empire (Toronto), 28 July 1927.
49 For a reference to Banting reworking his sketches in ink, see Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, Banting Papers, MS Coll 76, Box 28B, Journals of painting trips, 1927-1931, 19 July 1927, 5. See also A.J. Casson, “The Doctor as an Artist,” Northward Journal 14/15 (September 1979): 21. According to Casson, pen and pencil line drawings were often used by members of the Group when they were making images for publications (most notably for the Canadian Forum), as the paper used in publications “was not suitable for halftone production.” It is unknown whether Banting had the intention of publishing his images by making his pen and ink drawings, however, several of his iceberg images were later published in an article Banting submitted to the Canadian Geographical Journal in 1930.
Figure 2. A.Y. Jackson, *Icebergs*, 1927, graphite on wove paper, 19.5 x 28 cm, gift of the artist, National Gallery of Canada, no. 17729

Figure 3. Frederick Banting, untitled, 1927, pen and ink drawing, 10.2 x 15.2 cm, bequeathed by Henrietta Banting, 1976, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto, Box 43A
Figure 4. Frederick Banting, untitled, 1927, graphite on paper, 15.2 x 10.2 cm, bequeathed by Henrietta Banting, 1976, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto, Box 43A
Figure 5. A.Y. Jackson, *Studies of Beothic and Eskimos*, c. 1927, graphite on paper, 26.6 x 18.2 cm, gift of the founders, Robert and Signe McMichael, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, 1980.15.3
artists to explore greater distances. More importantly, however, the fluid and forgiving nature of drawing also enabled them to later adapt the Arctic scenery into a more comprehensible form. As the artists soon realized, it was difficult to translate the unfamiliar landscape into familiar tropes, which had often confounded them while sketching. And to a certain extent a challenge had been finding ways in which to effectively convey the variances in atmosphere and light that they had confronted in the North. Noting how the “midnight sun” made it difficult to ascertain “whether it was two o’clock in the morning or two in the afternoon,” Jackson later explained how the “summer sun does not produce the same effects on landscape as our summer sun here,” making it difficult to express the “rather colourless and thin, tinny” effect that he experienced in the North. Moreover, he discovered, the banks of fog that plagued most of the journey acted as “mirages playing pranks with the coast line,” creating difficulties in immediately translating spatial differences to a medium such as oil paint. Banting would later assert in an interview to reporters that the Arctic terrain had indeed bewildered the artists: “The distances are very deceiving and difficult to paint. It is hard to get a foreground and a middle distance that will give the intense feeling of space and vast distances.”

While Banting noted his admiration for Jackson’s ability to sketch under the “considerable” conditions of the North, which he claimed “would have chilled the

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52 Jackson, “Up North,” 480.
enthusiasm of a less ardent worker,” Jackson’s journal entries also evince the mounting frustration that he had felt during his attempts to translate the Arctic landscape.\textsuperscript{54}

Limitations posed by the Arctic environment, as well as long stints of sketching mainly from the confines of the ship, contributed to a temporary lapse of confidence in his ability to effectively paint the landscape with the same creative zeal that he had done on previous sketching expeditions (figs. 6-7).

Although Jackson described that they were able to freely sketch and “wander where we wished,” forays ashore were usually sporadic and brief.\textsuperscript{55} In fact, by the time the ship neared Bache Peninsula on 1 August, Jackson was worried that the ship might not make it ashore again due to the heavy ice conditions that they had been encountering at this stage of the voyage. With the ship stuck for six hours in ice “about a quarter of a mile out from the Post,” the prospect of reaching Bache seemed unlikely.\textsuperscript{56} Later, however, the crew were greeted by “two eskimos [sic] and two policemen” from Bache, who had to push a small boat over ice and water to reach the steamer so that both the ship’s personnel and provisions could get to the post.\textsuperscript{57} Cognizant of the fact that he had promised the Minister of the Interior a sketch of Bache in particular, Jackson and Banting accompanied the crew to the island and immediately set to work sketching the scenery. Jackson eventually found a suitable place to draw “where there was a lot of rock along the shore and ice floes and the steamer out about a quarter of a mile,” during which

\textsuperscript{54} Frederick G. Banting, foreword to \textit{The Far North, A Book of Drawings} by A.Y. Jackson (Toronto: Rous & Mann, Limited, 1928), n.p.
\textsuperscript{55} Jackson, \textit{A Painter’s Country}, 94.
Figure 6. Mr. Jackson, sketching onboard SS *Beothic*, 1927, Livingston/NWT Archives/N-1987-019-0024

Figure 7. Mr. Jackson and Dr. Banting sketching onboard SS *Beothic*, 1927, Livingston /NWT Archives/N-1987-019-0025
Jackson claimed Banting watched “to see how I went about it.”⁵⁸ His sketch of *Bache Post* (fig. 8) was one of the several images that he managed to produce during his brief outing at the post. A pen and ink drawing was later produced from the drawing and appeared in several publications, including the Department of the Interior’s 1934 report on the Eastern Arctic.⁵⁹

**Figure 8.** A.Y. Jackson, *Bache Post, Ellesmere Island*, 1927, graphite on paper, 12.6 x 20.2 cm, gift of the artist, MacKenzie Art Gallery, University of Regina Collection, 1963-003-002

Despite the fact that Jackson considered the trip to Bache Peninsula a success in terms of securing many drawings for the Department, he also noted in his journal that the excursion was rather “disappointing for us,” and the landscape somewhat uninspiring:

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⁵⁹ See Department of the Interior, *Canada’s Eastern Arctic: Its History, Resources, Population and Administration* (Ottawa: J.O. Patenaude, Printer to the King’s Most Excellent Majesty, 1934), 38. A pen and ink drawing of *Bache Post* first appeared on the front page of the second section in the *Toronto Daily Star* on 10 September 1927. The image was also published in Jackson’s 1928 book *The Far North* (plate 7).
The fog enveloped all but the lower hills. There was little vegetation at Bache, it seemed all dried up—mosses, small scrub willow, and odd poppy, and fire weed, but all starved looking. The hills are architectural, a red and ochre sandstone with very marked lines of stratification.

It had not been a month and Jackson was feeling the effects of being “shipbound” and was anxious to break the monotony of fog and ice. By 9 August he wrote that he had not worked for four days and conceded that there was “nothing to sketch.” In fact, during one seven hour visit to Craig Harbour, Ellesmere Island, which Banting found inspiring enough to even produce an oil sketch of the scenery (fig. 9), “putting the paint on thick” with the usual enthusiasm that Jackson claimed Banting had often done while painting, Jackson wrote that there was “nothing to see.” The Arctic landscape had even failed to inspire Jackson during his 4 August sketching excursion to Beechey Island (fig. 10):

From the artist’s point of view Beechey Island was a total loss. There was nothing to paint, the water was muddy, and we could barely see through the fog. Franklin, with two ships and one hundred and twenty-eight men, must have spent six months in this desolate place.

Some of Jackson’s frustration while documenting the Canadian North may have stemmed from his quest to find the quintessential Arctic that had been popularized, and idealized, through contemporary depictions over the years. Vilhjalmur Stefansson’s book, *The Friendly Arctic: The Story of Five Years in Polar Regions* (1921), and Robert

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Figure 9. Frederick Banting, *Craig Harbour, Ellesmere Island*, 1927, oil on plywood, 21.6 x 26.7 cm, gift of Lady Banting, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, 1966.10
Figure 10. A.Y. Jackson, artist, sketching at Beechey Island, Southwest of Devon Island, Lancaster Sound, 1927, NWT Archives/Yellowknife Museum Society fonds/N-1979-006-0050
Flaherty’s successful film, *Nanook of the North* (1922), were some of the heavily romanticized constructs of the Arctic and its peoples that had shaped southern perceptions of the North, and would have been familiar to Jackson. Indeed, toward the end of the expedition, Jackson described his disappointment in not finding this idealized North that had seemingly eluded him:

> We went tearing all over the place. I have been looking for something that I visualized—it exists round here, but I did not discover it. An arctic landscape, no place in particular, a generalized landscape… I got on a big hill that looked over miles of hills and lakes, and of course made a punk sketch.

In the end, Jackson conceded that this North did not exist except in the romantic rhetoric of heroic tales. As he described to the *Toronto Daily Star* shortly after returning from his Arctic voyage,

> One wicked thing we are doing with these government expeditions… is that we are taking all the thrills out of Arctic travel.

> I got most of my previous impressions of the Arctic before my trip from the reading of Dr. Kane’s books. You pictured the Arctic after that as a long nightmare of terrible black darkness and fog, with the crunching ice ever playing its terrible music. You were attacked by polar bears and your food caches were usually robbed by them before you returned in the last throes of hunger.

> As a matter of face, the boys all took their excitement with them in the form of detective stories.

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64 A “household name” at the time, Stefansson also gave two lectures at the Masonic Temple in Toronto on 11-12 April 1923, as part of his publicity tour for *The Friendly Arctic*. A full-page advertisement promoted the event in the *Toronto Daily Star* on 9 April 1923. See *Toronto Daily Star*, 9 April 1925, 5.


Any reservations that Jackson had about interpreting the Arctic landscape were quickly dispelled through his later reworking of his drawings into oil sketches and paintings. Aware that his works were to be documents of the region as well as part of a larger process of imagining the Arctic for the public, Jackson produced an impressive total of forty oil sketches from his large collection of drawings by the end of the journey, and six canvases that he later painted in Toronto. It is therefore not surprising that the North Jackson had personally struggled to interpret had been translated into familiar tropes. Specifically, his Arctic canvases such as *Aurora* (fig. 11) and *Eskimo Summer Camp* (fig. 12) portray the “picturesque quality” that Jackson had later told the press that artists could find in the Canadian North, and are redolent of the national/regional landscape idiom that he promoted through his art works.

In particular, Jackson’s rhetoric concerning the Arctic was consistent with the Group’s belief in the land as source of “Canadian consciousness” and creative expression. Indeed, upon returning from the 1927 Arctic expedition on 4 September, he provided “a sounding challenge to young Canada to be even more Canadian than it has been,” and “to put themselves at the head of the big adventure of discovering Canada’s vast northern empire, hitherto left to expeditions principally from Great Britain, the United States and Scandinavia.” As Jackson maintained, travelling to the Arctic and experiencing the land firsthand was not only a worthwhile adventure, but was necessary in order for Canadians to make their own distinct “contributions to art and science,” and

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Figure 11. A.Y. Jackson, *Aurora* (also known as *Northern Lights*), 1927, oil on canvas, 54.0 x 66.7 cm, gift of the Canadian National Exhibition Association, 1965, Art Gallery of Ontario, 1284
Figure 12. A.Y. Jackson, *Eskimo Summer Camp*, c. 1927, oil on canvas, 50.9 x 68 cm, gift of Mr. S. Walter Stewart, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, 1968.8.30
was an opportunity to lend expression to a region that Jackson deemed had been relatively unexplored by Canadians.⁷⁰

Although his own contribution to Canadian art was lauded by the contemporary press as pushing “the boundaries of Canadian painting farthest North” and was considered a novel means of depicting the region, his Arctic sketching expedition and subsequent artistic works were also a “calculated” effort “to waken the imagination” of the nation and to “turn people’s attention to the new fields of the Arctic.”⁷¹ “It is also evident,” as one reporter noted after previewing Jackson’s Arctic works, “that photographs of the country do not begin to give you an accurate impression of its floating fields of ice described by Jackson as lavender white outside, opal blue inside and green under the water.”⁷² This new visualization of the Far North for Canadians by a Canadian artist was in keeping with both Jackson’s and the Department’s efforts to engage the public in the imagining of the region as a distinctly Canadian possession, which was further popularized through the various exhibitions of “the furthest north collection of pictures ever shown in Canada.”⁷³

An exhibition of Jackson’s Arctic works was first mounted at the Art Gallery of Toronto (presently the Art Gallery of Ontario) from 21 September to 2 October 1927. As the Gallery recorded, the exhibition was well received by the public, with a total of 3,731 visitors in attendance during the eleven days his works were on view.⁷⁴ Touted as a “natural” extension of the “northern movement in Canadian art,” Jackson’s exhibition of

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⁷⁰ Ibid.
⁷¹ Ibid.
⁷⁴ Art Gallery of Ontario, Edward P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, B-7-5-1 (1927-1928), Minutes of Council, 4 October 1927.
“the Canadian Arctic regions,” consisted of a selection of sixty oil sketches and black and white drawings produced during the expedition. Most tellingly, however, was the context in which Jackson’s exhibit of recent Arctic works was presented to the public. The Art Gallery of Toronto’s exhibition catalogue, although clearly acknowledging Jackson’s remarkable accomplishment of working in the Arctic “through the courtesy of the Minister of the Interior,” also framed the collaborative effort within the same context as the heroic narratives of Arctic expeditions past, thereby linking the sketching expedition to the exploratory voyages made by “ships’ officers” who often sketched during their Arctic quests.

As described in the catalogue, most of Jackson’s sketches during the “Canadian Government Arctic Expedition” were made along the “great highways of the Arctic explorer,” once “followed by Nares, Hale, Greeley, and… Parry.” This association with noted nineteenth-century British and American Arctic explorers, while certainly contributing to the artist-explorer mythos that had surrounded Jackson and the Group due to their various sketching expeditions across Canada, was also an effort to advance both Jackson’s as well as the Canadian government’s own distinct contribution within the historical narrative of Arctic exploration. In particular, reference was made of Canada’s own considerable accomplishments in the region, thus highlighting Canadian sovereignty over the Arctic through the nation’s successful occupation and maintenance of posts:

The sketches in the exhibition are a series of impressions made often while the ship was in movement or during exciting but all too brief periods ashore. The expedition was in charge of Mr. G.P. Mackenzie, the Str. Beothic in Command of Cpt. Falke, the immediate purpose to visit the various posts established by the

76 Ibid.
Royal Canadian Mounted Police. A year’s supply of fuel and provisions were landed at each of the posts, and men who had been two years on duty were relieved... To maintain a Police Post at Bache Peninsula is a remarkable achievement, as only five ships have succeeded in pushing farther north in Kane Basin.  

As rhetoric surrounding the Arctic sketching expedition suggest, the display of Jackson’s artistic works provided both Jackson and the Department a platform to define and advance the region as distinctly Canadian to the broader public, while generating popular interest in the government’s efforts in the Arctic as well as Canadian art. Indeed, shortly after the opening of the Art Gallery of Toronto exhibit, Jackson wrote to Finnie that publicity surrounding the government-sponsored expedition had created “more interest... in our Arctic than I have ever seen before. If the country is good for nothing else,” as Jackson explained to Finnie, “it’s a happy hunting ground for artists, it is really thrilling, heroic stuff.”  

Eager to repeat the apparent success of the Toronto exhibit and to take advantage of the immediate public interest in the Arctic, Jackson suggested to Finnie that the exhibition should be promptly extended to the National Gallery of Canada as well. “I have a lot of it on view now at the Art Gallery and if the National Gallery at

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77 Ibid.

78 LAC, Northern Affairs Program, RG 85, vol. 12, file 20, A.Y. Jackson, A.Y. Jackson to O.S. Finnie, 25 September 1927. Jackson was not the only one to have received publicity upon his return from the expedition. A scandal erupted shortly after Banting’s return from the Arctic when he inadvertently disclosed to Toronto Daily Star journalist, C.R. Greenaway, that the Inuit population were being exploited by the Hudson’s Bay Company. As Greenaway reported: “The doctor gave repeated instances of how the trade was always on the side of the company. For over $100,000 of fox skins, he estimated that the Eskimos had not received $5,000 worth of goods.” What was supposed to be a strictly confidential discussion between Banting and Greenaway, ended up being a public spectacle that reached newspaper headlines across the country. While the matter was later sorted out between Banting and the Department, he was never invited to travel on any future patrols, despite his interest in travelling as a medical officer. See C.R. Greenaway, “Banting Regrets Hudson Bay Use of Eskimos,” Toronto Daily Star, 8 September 1927; “Dr. Banting Has Returned Home,” Ottawa Journal, 8 September 1927; Charles Bishop, “Ottawa Huffy at Banting,” Calgary Herald, 10 September 1927; LAC, Naomi Jackson Groves Fonds, MG30-D351, vol. 98, file 11, Text of a Talk by A.Y. Jackson re: Frederick Banting, n.d., 9.
Ottawa can arrange it I think the whole show could be sent on framed and ready to be put up," Jackson explained, adding,

We can then decide on what would be the best canvas to be worked up. I would like you to choose a sketch for yourself as well. I have a lot of drawings, some of which might be used in Resources and other papers. I have material to make drawings of almost any place up there. I hope to make a whole series of these drawings. ‘Resources’ would be more interesting to my mind if it contained occasional drawings by Canadian artists. They make a deeper impression than photographs.79

Jackson’s suggestion of displaying his Arctic works in a national institution as well as his idea of using the Arctic material in Departmental publications was already in keeping with his original agreement with the Department. But, as Finnie concurred with Jackson, the Arctic sketches and drawings had indeed generated greater public interest in the Arctic, and believed that the Arctic works should be further promoted to the wider public: “These will be almost unique in Canadian Galleries and will be the means of giving the Arctic a further boost,” he wrote.80

In the meantime, while Finnie awaited a reply from the National Gallery’s Director Eric Brown, after making a request to exhibit Jackson’s Arctic collection so “that it may be properly displayed,” Jackson continued to promote his selection of sketches and drawings through a small exhibition at the Hart House Sketch Club from 16 October to 31 October.81 Hart House, which at the time was a men’s recreational facility located on the University of Toronto campus, had been a longstanding exhibition venue

79 LAC, Northern Affairs Program, RG 85, vol. 12, file 20, A.Y. Jackson, Jackson to Finnie, 25 September 1927.
80 LAC, Northern Affairs Program, RG 85, vol. 12, file 20, A.Y. Jackson, Jackson to Finnie, 25 September 1927; LAC, Northern Affairs Program, RG 85, vol. 12, file 20, A.Y. Jackson, Finnie to Jackson, 27 September 1927.
for the members of the Group, and was a vigorous supporter of Canadian art and the development of nationalistic expression.\textsuperscript{82} Not surprisingly, Jackson’s novel venture “many leagues” into the Canadian “hinterland” had also made a favourable impression upon visitors during the exhibition, with one reviewer exclaiming: “…all honour to him for giving us so realistic an impression of the Arctic regions. Those who have not seen any of his summer’s works may be assured that the same high quality as pervades his ‘Quebec Village’ in the Sketch Room still persists.”\textsuperscript{83}

While it is evident that Jackson’s Arctic works were favourably received by the public as well as the press, the National Gallery exhibit, which was finally mounted sometime in early November 1927 in response to Finnie’s request, was not the highly publicized event that Jackson and the Department had initially expected, and had failed to draw significant attention.\textsuperscript{84} Much of the issue surrounding the Ottawa exhibit had to do with the impromptu manner in which the exhibit was arranged, and the unfortunate lack of organization and coordination between the Gallery and the Department in publicizing the show. As a letter sent from Brown to Dr. Francis J. Shepherd, who was chairman of the board of trustees for the National Gallery of Canada, indicates, Brown agreed to hang a “temporary exhibit” of Jackson’s Arctic sketches and drawings for “a week or two” in early November.\textsuperscript{85} Yet there appeared to be an oversight, either by the Gallery or the Department, in publicizing the show; as correspondence reveals, there was a misunderstanding with regard to which organization would take responsibility for

\textsuperscript{82} Hill, \textit{The Group of Seven}, 120-121.
\textsuperscript{83} A.W.L., “Sketch Room,” \textit{The Varsity}, 14 October 1927.
\textsuperscript{84} There was no catalogue or record made of this exhibit, although it is clear from the correspondence between the parties involved that a short exhibition was organized sometime around 3 November 1927 at the National Gallery of Canada.
\textsuperscript{85} NGC, National Gallery of Canada Fonds, Exhibitions in Gallery, Jackson (A.Y.) Sketches – Drawings of the Canadian Arctic Regions 1927, Brown to Francis Shepherd, 30 September 1927.
promoting the exhibit. Although Brown noted in a letter to Shepherd that the Gallery need not worry about advertising the exhibit, it is evident in his letter to Jackson that Brown assumed that “the North West Territories Department” would “do the publicity business.” Conversely, the Department had assumed that the Gallery would handle the matter and thus Jackson’s exhibition was mounted without any of the usual fanfare during its brief showing in Ottawa. 

Despite the seemingly quiet affair, the 1927 show was significant, as it was during that time that members of the Department viewed the approximately fifty Arctic sketches and drawings that were on exhibit at the Gallery. It was also during that time that the Minister of the Interior, Charles Stewart, would choose as the subject of the final canvas, an image of the Beothic (fig. 13) lying at anchor off Canada’s most northerly post at Bache, Ellesmere Island. Although it took two years before the canvas was completed by Jackson for the Department, which donated it to the National Gallery of Canada in January of 1930, Stewart’s particular choice of subject matter from Jackson’s otherwise

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87 It appears that Finnie assumed that the Gallery would contact him regarding the mounting of the exhibit and had awaited a reply from Brown and McCurry, which they had failed to furnish until the opening of the exhibit. During the 1930 Arctic exhibition Jackson reminded McCurry to give notice to members of the Department in advance as “they were sore last time about so little notice.” NGC, National Gallery of Canada Fonds, Exhibitions in Gallery, Jackson (A.Y.) Sketches – Drawings of the Canadian Arctic Regions 1927, McCurry to Finnie, 3 November 1927; LAC, Northern Affairs Program, RG 85, vol. 12, file 20, A.Y. Jackson, Finnie to Jackson, 3 November 1927. See also NGC, National Gallery of Canada Fonds, Exhibitions in Gallery, Jackson (A.Y.) & Harris (Lawren) Arctic Sketches - 1930 v.1, Jackson to McCurry, 15 November 1930.

88 It is uncertain how many of Jackson’s images were actually on display as there were no catalogues issued, nor records kept by the Gallery of the exhibit, but Finnie explains in a letter to Cory that there were “some fifty in number” during the 1927 showing; LAC, Northern Affairs Program, RG 85, vol. 12, file 20, A.Y. Jackson, O.S. Finnie to W.W. Cory, 30 January 1930.

89 Jackson would give the oil sketch to Finnie as a gift in 1929. LAC, Naomi Jackson Groves Fonds, MG30-D351, vol. 91, file 5, Jackson to Finnie, 9 October 1929.
conventional landscapes is revealing, and illustrates the efforts made by the Department in advancing its position regarding Arctic sovereignty concerns through the promotion of Jackson’s works. A letter sent from Stewart to Brown during the time of the Department’s gift to the gallery suggests that careful consideration was given to its selection for this reason:

Mr. Jackson volunteered to paint a canvas for me, and I think you will agree that his picture, ‘The Beothic at Bache Post, Ellesmere Island,’ is in every way worthy of a place in the National Gallery collection.
I, therefore, take much pleasure in offering this picture which, in my opinion, is valuable not only for its artistic qualities but also for its significance of Canada’s watchful care over those in the remotest hinterland.  

It can be posited that the Department’s desire to convey “Canada’s watchful care” over the Arctic was a calculated assertion of Canadian authority at a time of heightened tension over the Arctic islands. Indeed, recent challenges to Canadian claims concerning the legal “ownership” of some of the islands had prompted the government to take a more assertive role with regard to its position in the region. In particular, the more recent challenge from the Americans regarding the use of Ellesmere Island during the 1925 American exploratory expedition led by Donald B. MacMillan and Admiral Richard Bird, as well as the Norwegian government’s renewed interest in laying claims to the still highly contested Sverdrup Islands (an issue which would not be resolved until 1930), were instances that had necessitated the need for the annual patrols and government posts in order to maintain effective control of the Eastern Arctic from foreign interests.  

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90 LAC, Northern Affairs Program, RG 85, vol. 12, file 20, A.Y. Jackson, Finnie to Brown, 30 January 1930. See also LAC, Northern Affairs Program, RG 85, vol. 12, file 20, A.Y. Jackson, Brown to Stewart, 30 January 1930.  
91 In early 1925, the Canadian government discovered that MacMillan planned an expedition to the Arctic under the command of Admiral Richard Byrd. Although the expedition was to be based at Etah Greenland, what was particularly disconcerting was that this expedition also proposed air flights over, and stations on, some of the Arctic islands. More specifically, the expedition planned to use Ellesmere and Axel Heiberg Islands as supply bases. Considering that both these islands were where Canadian claims were weakest under the dictates of international law, it sparked concerns that the Americans were ready to launch their own claims to the islands. Worried that new American discoveries could supplant Canadian claims, Canada’s Northern Advisory Board discussed measures that could help strengthen and defend its claims to the region, and concluded that Canada should exercise its authority by requiring permits from all expeditions entering Canadian territory. Despite the government’s effort to assert its authority in the region, the Americans never complied with Canada’s request and the expedition set out with the Bowdoin and the *Peary* on 17 June 1925, without any permits. Although the outright evasion of Canadian authority created heightened concern over American intentions, the United States never pursued any claims, nor indicated that it had intended to do so in the ensuing diplomatic correspondence between the nations. However, Canadian fears may not have been unfounded. Historian Morris Zaslow explains that in a latter account, Macmillan admitted that the expedition avoided Canadian permits “as the United States still did not acknowledge Canadian sovereignty over Ellesmere and other unoccupied islands,” suggesting that there was interest in pursuing American claims. The most compelling evidence, uncovered by American historian Nancy Fogelson, indicates that the United States had indeed questioned the validity of Canadian
therefore not surprising that Jackson’s painting of *The Beothic at Bache Post, Ellesmere Island* would have held significant appeal to the Department during a time when the government sought to strengthen its Arctic claims, and would have served, as Brown aptly stated, as “a unique artistic record of the development and protection of the Canadian north land.” Later, the completed canvas (which is discussed in the following

claims and had even “considered invoking the Monroe Doctrine to curb Canadian expansion.” Moreover, Fogelson explains that the expedition had not only intended to find new Arctic territory for the United States, but that MacMillan had also sought to annex Ellesmere and Axel Heiberg Islands, as potential sites for American airbases.

During the time of the MacMillan-Byrd’s expedition, Canada had also faced opposing interest from Norway. On 12 March 1925, the Norwegian Consul General to Canada sent an enquiry to the Department of External Affairs, regarding Canada’s position over the Sverdrup Islands. Named for the Norwegian explorer Otto Sverdrup, who discovered the group of islands—consisting of Axel Heiberg, Amund Ringnes, and Ellef Ringnes Islands—during his second *Fram* expedition to the High Arctic between 1898-1902, the islands were originally claimed for Norway by Sverdrup at the turn of the twentieth century. Yet due to more pressing concerns during that time—the nation was in the process of establishing independence from Sweden—these claims were never formally recognized by Norway. At this time, however, the Norwegian government wished to revisit Sverdrup’s claims and take steps to secure the islands for Norway. Norway’s enquiry was a cause for concern, as the Canadian government realized that the nation could potentially make a case for the islands, which were based on discovery, rather than through the vague terms based on cession and Canada’s mere proclamations to the region. In an effort to delay the matter until the Canadian government considered its options, the Department of External Affairs decided not to reply to the letter. Yet Norway persisted and over the next two years the Consul General had sent four more letters—in each instance, requesting a statement from Canada, regarding its position on the islands in question. Canada’s reluctance to answer Norway’s enquiries, however, prompted the Consul General of Norway, Ludwig Aubert, to issue a statement on 26 March 1928, declaring that Norway intended to legally pursue its claim under international law, thus sparking fears over an impending dispute between the nations over Arctic territory. In the end a settlement was reached, with Canada paying Sverdrup a sum of $67,000 to acquire maps and papers relating to his High Arctic exploration, including a pledge from Sverdrup for any future advisory services, to provide any “personal knowledge and experience at the disposal of the Canadian Government for purposes of further developments” in the region. By November 1930, Norway formally recognized Canadian sovereignty over the islands, thus securing Canada’s title to the Arctic Archipelago. For sources pertaining to American and Norwegian advances on the region at the time see Nancy Fogelson, *Arctic Exploration & International Relations 1900-1932* (Fairbanks, Alaska: University of Alaska Press, 1992), 92-93; Shelagh D. Grant, *Polar Imperative: A History of Arctic Sovereignty in North America* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 2010), 230-234; LAC, Department of External Affairs, RG 25, Vol. 2666, file 9062-C40, Minutes of the First Meeting of the Interdepartmental Committee, O.D. Skeleton, chair, 24 April 1925; also Skeleton to Cory, 25 April 1925; Morris Zaslow, "Administrating the Arctic Islands 1880-1940: Policemen, Missionaries, Fur Traders," in *A Century of Canada's Arctic Islands: 23rd Symposium*, ed. Morris Zaslow (Ottawa: The Royal Society of Canada, 1981), 61-68; Peter Schledermann, "The muskox patrol: High Arctic sovereignty revisited," *Arctic* 56, no. 1 (March 2003): 101; LAC, Northern Affairs Program, RG 85, vol. 347, file 201-1, report from the Department of External Affairs, 28 October 1929, 1; Ken S. Coates, P. Whitney Lackenbauer, William Morrison, Greg Poelzer, *Arctic Front: Defending Canada in the Far North* (Toronto: Thomas Allen Publishers, 2008), 39-40; LAC, Northern Affairs Program, RG 85, vol. 347, file 201-1, Otto Sverdrup to Prime Minister Mackenzie King, 15 April 1929, 2.

92 LAC, Northern Affairs Program, RG 85, vol. 12, file 20, A.Y. Jackson, Brown to Stewart, 30 January 1930.
chapter) would indeed serve as a record of Canadian efforts during the Department’s well-orchestrated National Gallery exhibit in 1930.

There were no immediate plans to exhibit Jackson’s 1927 collection of Arctic works beyond the “national” showing in Ottawa; however, shortly after the sketches and drawings returned to the Art Gallery of Toronto, a request was made by William Hekking, Director of the Albright Gallery in Buffalo, New York, to exhibit Jackson’s Arctic works at the gallery. Hekking, who had shown a keen interest in the Group after seeing their works at a show at the Art Gallery of Toronto in 1926, and who was responsible for including members of the Group in the 1926 Philadelphia Sequential Exposition as well as in a recent 1927 touring exhibition in the United States, had supported the Group’s efforts toward advancing a distinctly Canadian school of art.93 Intrigued by Jackson’s latest sketching foray into the Arctic, Hekking made a last minute request to include Jackson’s Arctic collection in a scheduled exhibit at the Albright Gallery for January of 1928. A letter from the Art Gallery of Toronto’s curator Edward R. Greig, suggests that Hekking had already planned to exhibit some of Jackson’s Quebec and northern Ontario paintings for the gallery’s January show, before deciding to include the Arctic works as well. “I understand that something was said about your having the Jackson Arctic Sketches in January,” wrote Greig on December 22. “Nobody

93 Hekking selected forty paintings by Franklin Carmichael, Harris, Jackson, Arthur Lismer and J.E.H. MacDonald to be toured in exhibits in Rochester, Toledo, Syracuse and Buffalo in 1927. Art historian Charles C. Hill explains that Fred Housser’s book, A Canadian Art Movement, provided additional background during the exhibitions on the “ideals that inspired the works”; Hill, The Group of Seven, 203, 217.
here seems to know whether you want them or not, and in case you are depending upon them, will you please let me know what I should do with them."94

By January, twenty-nine sketches and seventeen framed pen and ink drawings from Jackson’s Arctic collection were sent to the Buffalo gallery, to be exhibited alongside the fourteen canvases that were initially chosen for the show. As evident from the foreword in the exhibition catalogue, however, particular attention was given to Jackson’s Arctic material not only due to the sheer number of Arctic works that were on display, but also because of the novelty of the recent venture:

Last summer Mr. A. Y. Jackson, at the invitation of the Canadian government made a trip to the Hudson Bay country on one of their relief and provision expeditions to northern British Canadian outpost stations. Mr. Jackson, who is one of the most talented artists of the well-known ‘Group of Seven’ of Toronto, Canada, made a number of sketches of his impressions on this trip. He has the distinction of being the first artist to have gone as far north as Ellsmere [sic] Island. These sketches give a vivid reflection of the austere character of the country, which, nevertheless, is not without its charm and interest. The exhibition also contains a few larger and more serious paintings showing impressions of the artist in Northern Quebec. A painting by Mr. Jackson was recently purchased by the National Gallery in London.95

Clearly providing another opportunity to advance both the Department’s and Jackson’s efforts in the North to the wider public, the exhibit, like the other exhibitions that promoted the 1927 Arctic expedition, served as a basis of evidence of Canada’s presence and occupation in the region. Yet however beneficial public displays may have been to furthering Canadian sovereignty aims to the public, the Albright Gallery exhibition would be the last venue to exhibit Jackson’s extensive collection of Arctic

95 The Buffalo Fine Arts Academy, Albright Art Gallery, “A Group of Sketches From the Arctic Circle by A. Y. Jackson” (Buffalo, New York: January, 1928), 2.
works from the expedition. By February of 1928, Jackson’s focus turned to promoting the latest Group exhibition at the Art Gallery of Toronto, and by July of that year, he and Banting had set out by rail on their north-western sketching expedition with geologist Dr. James Mackintosh Bell to Great Slave Lake, thus ending any further possibility of exhibiting the collection of works at home or abroad.

Nevertheless, the exhibitions would not be the last opportunity to promote the collaborative effort to the public. It was sometime after Jackson’s return from the 1927 excursion that he was approached by Toronto publishers Rous and Mann with a proposal to publish a series of his Arctic pen and ink drawings. The result was *The Far North*, which was published in 1928. The book, originally slated to have a limited press run of one thousand copies, features seventeen plates of the Arctic islands and government posts that the *Beothic* reached during the expedition, each accompanied by descriptive text written by Jackson. Banting provided the foreword to Jackson’s book: “To travel up the North Pole route to Kane Basin, then along the old North-West passage route of Lancaster Sound, and then into Hudson Strait all in one short summer is perhaps a superficial way of seeing the Arctic,” Banting explained, “but I feel that much of the spirit of the country is expressed in these drawings.”

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96 The Group had close ties to the firm. The vice president of Rous & Mann was Albert H. Robson, who was a former art director of the Grip Firm and who also worked at the Art Gallery of Toronto, was an ardent supporter of the Group. At one point, most of the Group members had been employed by the firm; Hill, *The Group of Seven*, 49. See also Albert H. Robson, *Canadian Landscape Painters* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1932), 134-140, 160.


The illustrations were a visual document of Jackson’s Arctic journey through an artist’s eye, and skillfully recount the various terrain that he had encountered in the North (fig. 14).

**Figure 14.** A.Y. Jackson, *Beechey Island – Where Franklin Expedition Wintered 1845-46*, 1927, ink on paper, 27.2 x 34.3 cm, gift of Mr. Peter Dobush, Winnipeg Art Gallery, G-65-149

Although the drawings were strongly realistic, some of the accompanying text provides the reader with additional detail of textures and colours that could not be easily translated through the black and white pen and ink drawings. But as Jackson’s textual accounts also reveal, the images were as much a visual record of the Department’s
northern activities during the 1927 expedition as they were artistic interpretations of the
landscape. “For three years the Canadian Arctic Expedition have pushed through Rice
Strait, a narrow channel between Pim Island and Ellesmere,” Jackson described of
Fram’s Bay, “The R.C.M.P. have a reserve depot here beside a glacier that runs into the
strait.”

While certainly lending additional support to governmental efforts in the North,
Jackson’s more laudatory accounts of the Department’s Arctic expedition were
undoubtedly aimed at generating popular interest in the book, in a similar vein to
Stefansson’s ever-popular exploratory accounts at the time. As Jackson dramatically
described of the expedition’s heroic efforts to reach Canada’s most northerly post,

When Capt. Falke found Kane Basin free of ice, the Beothic raced
through to Bache, pounded through two miles of ice near the post,
unloaded a year’s supply of coal and provisions, took off Sgt. Joy
and Constable Bain, tried to blow up with gunpowder the ice
which was crowding the steamer, spent six hours helpless in
heavy flow ice, and then finding a lead to open water got back to
Rice Strait within twenty-six hours.

Expecting brisk sales, Rous and Mann believed that Jackson’s book would appeal to
audiences for both its artistic as well as historical account of Canada’s “north country.”
Although several copies of the book were sent to various firms for review—even as far as
Australia—and it was lauded by Toronto journalist Blodwen Davies as “an important bit
of Canadiana,” the venture was a commercial failure. By 1932, the remaining copies

100 Ibid.
101 Ibid. Rous & Mann were prepared for the book to go into second printing. LAC, Naomi Jackson Groves
Fonds, MG30-D351, vol. 91, file 5, H.L. Rous to A.Y. Jackson, 24 November 1931.
102 Blodwen Davies, “Two Toronto Artists Going into the Arctic,” Toronto Star Weekly, 21 June 1930.
The publishers originally wanted to start with a limited press run of one thousand copies; however, only
five hundred copies were printed in total, and even less were sold. See Jackson Groves, A.Y. Jackson: The
Arctic 1927, n.p.
were sold “at a reduced rate,” much to Jackson’s chagrin. A letter from H.L. Rous of Rous and Mann Limited explained to Jackson:

Although we consider the volume an extremely interesting and valuable work, yet necessarily there are a limited number of people who are interested in the north country, and although we did every possible thing in our power, we could not, unfortunately, make the sales larger than they were.  

Generating greater awareness of a region so remote and largely removed from most Canadians’ everyday lives, and of a landscape that “possessed of qualities more elusive than even a magician like A.Y. Jackson could define with oils,” was not an easy task.  

As Jackson himself would note after his return from the 1927 sketching expedition: “Most Canadians have a rather hazy idea of the North Country. They can visualize James Bay and discuss the rival merits of Port Nelson and Churchill as an ocean terminus, without showing much enthusiasm for either.”  

Efforts to engage the public in the imagining of the North through Jackson’s sketching expedition as well as the subsequent public displays of his work did, however, draw unprecedented attention to the Department’s activities in the region during the time, and provided a platform to define and advance the region as a Canadian possession.  

Efforts in defining and advancing the Canadian North to the public also had much to do with Jackson’s vigorous self-promotion as a Canadian artist, and his ability to express the nationalistic aims and ideals advanced by the Group in their “expanding

103 LAC, Naomi Jackson Groves Fonds, MG30-D351, vol. 91, file 5, H.L. Rous to A.Y. Jackson, 24 November 1931.
search” to interpret the country through their art.\textsuperscript{106} As expressed in an article that appeared in the \textit{Canadian Forum}—a Toronto-based journal with strong nationalist leanings—Jackson’s foray into Arctic territory was significant to the emergent “national art movement” that was promulgated by the Group and its supporters at the time. Echoing Jackson’s earlier sentiments that Canadians must experience the “north country” first-hand in order to make a contribution both to the national narrative and to Canadian art and science, the writer declared that the opportunity had come for artists to define and advance the Canadian “movement” further north:

At a time when there seems to be no life left in landscape painting anywhere else in the world, when painters almost everywhere are making studies of rotten apples and antimacassars and blue horses and inventing theories of art to justify their having landed themselves in such a cul-de-sac, it is refreshing, nay it is wildly exhilarating, to reflect upon this Canadian opportunity, this almost fabulous wealth of unexamined or half-examined landscape calling bird-like to the artist to come to it and make it his own.\textsuperscript{107}

Despite this call to artists, it would not be until 1930 when another Canadian would lend artistic expression to the region again. Not surprisingly, it would be one of the movement’s chief members who would accompany Jackson on his second expedition to the Arctic, in quest of the “Canadian opportunity” it offered.

\textsuperscript{106} Hill, \textit{The Group of Seven}, 155.
\textsuperscript{107} \textit{Canadian Forum}, 8, no. 86 (November, 1927): 424.
Chapter 3

The Arctic Revisited: 1930 Expedition

Charles Stewart’s presentation of *The Beothic at Bache Post, Ellesmere Island* (fig. 13) to the National Gallery of Canada in January of 1930 not only secured a permanent home for Jackson’s painting of the 1927 government expedition to “the most northerly post in Canada,” but also proved to be a prudent move by the Department. In addition to having the painting displayed in a prominent, national institution for posterity, the Gallery also offered additional support in promoting the new acquisition. Having made a favourable impression during the painting’s debut at the National Gallery’s Annual Exhibition of Canadian Art held from 23 January to 28 February 1930, Eric Brown considered Jackson’s Arctic canvas to “be of great value to the public” for its “artistic and other qualities.”\(^{108}\) Because of the painting’s promotional value and its significance to both Canadian northern efforts and Canadian art, the Gallery immediately made plans to issue reproductions of the image for distribution to the broader public.\(^{109}\)

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109 Educating the broader public in Canadian art became part of the National Gallery’s mandate in the 1920s, when the Gallery began distributing a series of art reproductions and information guides to both public and private schools across Canada. The program was highly popular, and ultimately made art accessible to “the masses,” with the program extending into public libraries in the 1930s. According to Jackson’s niece, Naomi Jackson Groves, Jackson’s painting of the *Beothic* “seems to have been reproduced more often than any other work by A.Y”; Naomi Jackson Groves, *A.Y.’s Canada: Drawings by A.Y. Jackson* (Toronto and Vancouver: Clarke, Irwin & Company Limited, 1968), 2. For information regarding the National Gallery of Canada’s reproduction program see *Report of the Royal Commission on National development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences* (Ottawa: Edmond Cloutier, C.M.G., O.A., D.S.P., Printer to the King’s Most Excellent Majesty, 1951), 78-79; Joyce Zemans, “Establishing the Canon: Nationhood, Identity, and the National Gallery’s First Reproduction Programme of Canadian Art,” *Journal of Canadian Art History* 16, no. 2 (1995): 6-25. For source on Brown’s interest in reproducing Jackson’s painting of the *Beothic* see LAC, Northern Affairs Program, RG 85, vol. 12, file 20, A.Y. Jackson, Brown to Stewart, 30 January 1930.
Jackson would take advantage of renewed interest in his Arctic work when he wrote to Finnie in February, enquiring of the possibility of sketching aboard the Department’s 1930 Arctic expedition. “I’m not making any plans yet,” he wrote, “but in the event of my desiring to get more material in the Arctic is there a possibility of there being accommodation on the Beothic next summer[?]” He continued,

We had such a lot of fog that we scarcely saw the country north of Dundas. I realize there are a lot of things more important than painting pictures up there, but in the event of there being a small corner somewhere on board would an application from yours truly be considered.\textsuperscript{110}

Interested in expanding upon his work from the 1927 expedition as well, Jackson also explained to Finnie that he was slowly getting his “northern material into shape,” adding,

I am sending a large canvas of the coast near Port Burwell down to an exhibition in Washington and New York, and hope to get some others under way soon. In time we will get the Americans to think of the Arctic as part of Canada.\textsuperscript{111}

While Jackson’s attempt to rouse Finnie’s interest in publicizing the Canadian North through his art works can be considered a calculated effort to secure passage aboard the 1930 government expedition at a time of heightened enthusiasm over his Arctic canvas, his desire to advance the Arctic beyond the walls of the National Gallery also coincided with government efforts to secure greater international acceptance of its Arctic claims. With Canada still in the throes of negotiations with Norway over the Sverdrup Islands, as well as the Americans’ continued reluctance to officially declare or endorse Canadian sovereignty over the entire Arctic Archipelago (due to the possibility of laying its own claims to any undiscovered islands in the region), the Canadian

\textsuperscript{110} LAC, Northern Affairs Program, RG 85, vol. 12, file 20, A.Y. Jackson, Jackson to Finnie, 13 February 1930.
\textsuperscript{111} \textit{Ibid.}
government continued to seek ways in establishing Canada’s sovereignty over the Arctic Archipelago.\(^{112}\)

Given the government’s unease over a possible challenge to the Arctic region, it is not surprising that Finnie was intrigued by the prospect of another collaborative venture between the Department and Jackson. Recognizing the significant role that art had played in engaging and generating public interest in Canadian northern efforts as a result of the 1927 collaborative effort, Finnie immediately enquired into the feasibility of accommodating Jackson on the Department’s next Arctic expedition. “I am attaching a letter dated 13\(^{\text{th}}\) instant from Mr. A.Y. Jackson, R.C.A., of Toronto,” Finnie noted in a letter to W.W. Cory, Deputy Minister to the Department of the Interior,

You will notice Mr. Jackson desires to secure more material from the Arctic and wants to know what the attitude of the Department might be should he apply to go up on the “Beothic” again. There is no doubt he and Dr. Banting went up in the worst year for storms, cold and heavy weather that had been experienced since our ship has gone to the Arctic. They did not get a favourable

\(^{112}\) In his 1925 article for *Foreign Affairs*, American legal and treaty expert David Hunter Miller examined Canada’s claims to the Arctic Archipelago and questioned if its title to the Arctic islands was as secure as the nation believed. Although he stated that Canada’s claim to Baffin Island was “as certainly Canadian as is Ontario,” and had no objection to claims made to any land “lying north of the Canadian mainland,” he also argued that there were “shades of doubt” concerning unoccupied and “undiscovered” islands in the archipelago. According to Miller, the idea that Canada possessed all that was “known and unknown, west of Davis Strait and longitude 60°, east of the meridian which divides Alaska from Canada (141°), and north of the Canadian mainland up to the Pole” was still a matter of debate and open to a challenge. The MacMillan-Byrd expedition in 1925 was one instance in which the Americans refused to acknowledge Canadian sovereignty over Ellesmere and other occupied islands in the Arctic. Northern affairs experts, Ken S. Coates, P. Whitney Lackenbauer, William R. Morrison and Greg Poelzer note that, although the United States now acknowledges Canadian Sovereignty over the Arctic Islands, there is still disagreement over Canadian claims that the Northwest Passage is Canadian internal waters; Ken S. Coates, P. Whitney Lackenbauer, William Morrison, Greg Poelzer, *Arctic Front: Defending Canada in the Far North* (Toronto: Thomas Allen Publishers, 2008), 1-2. For sources pertaining to the U.S. reluctance to acknowledge Canadian Arctic claims, and details of the MacMillan-Byrd expedition see David Hunter Miller, “Political Rights in the Arctic,” *Foreign Affairs* 4, no. 1 (Oct. 1925): 49-51; Nancy Fogelson, *Arctic Exploration & International Relations 1900-1932* (Fairbanks, Alaska: University of Alaska Press, 1992), 92-93; Morris Zaslow, "Administering the Arctic Islands 1880-1940: Policemen, Missionaries, Fur Traders," in *A Century of Canada's Arctic Islands: 23rd Symposium*, ed. Morris Zaslow (Ottawa: The Royal Society of Canada, 1981), 67.
impression but whether you would desire to again offer the hospitality of the ship to Mr. Jackson, I do not know.\textsuperscript{113}

Although Cory concurred with Finnie that the Department “should endeavour to accommodate” Jackson on the 1930 expedition and was “entirely favourable” to the idea of a second collaborative venture between the Department and the artist, there was some concern over whether the Department could find any room for Jackson on the \textit{Beothic} that year. Of particular concern was the large quantity of supplies that needed to be shipped to the police posts and the newly established hospital in Pangnirtung during the expedition, as well as an increase in the number of personnel travelling on the ship.\textsuperscript{114} However, anxious to include Jackson on the forthcoming expedition, efforts were made by the Department to secure suitable accommodation on the \textit{Beothic}.\textsuperscript{115} As Finnie informed Jackson,

\begin{quote}
…the owners of the ‘Beothic’ are giving serious consideration to increasing the passenger accommodation on the ship, but we have no definite assurance from this point as yet.
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{113} LAC, Northern Affairs Program, RG 85, vol. 12, file 20, A.Y. Jackson, Finnie to W.W. Cory, 18 February 1930.}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{114} Finnie wrote to Jackson, “we have more people going this year than in any previous year as members of the expedition,” noting that the police were expecting to send “ten or twelve men,” and that “a number of other government officers” would also be travelling on the ship; LAC, Northern Affairs Program, RG 85, vol. 12, file 20, A.Y. Jackson, Finnie to Jackson, 22 February 1930. An increase in the number of personnel travelling aboard the 1930 expedition can most likely be attributed to the new hospital and the number of stations that were in full operation in the Eastern Arctic by that time. The posts that were in operation in 1930 were Port Burwell, Pond Inlet, Pangnirtung, Dundas Harbour, Bache Peninsula and Lake Harbour. Established by the Anglicans in Pangnirtung in 1929, St. Luke’s Mission Hospital operated from 1930-1972. Jackson noted that sixteen hundred tons of coal and lumber were taken to the new hospital during the 1930 expedition. Other supplies taken aboard the ship included a motor-boat for Chesterfield Inlet, and library books for the police posts; Jackson, \textit{A Painter’s Country}, 103. See also LAC, Northern Affairs Program, RG 85, vol. 69, file 201-1 for reference to the building of the hospital in Pangnirtung. For a detailed history of St. Luke’s Hospital see Christopher G. Trott, “St. Luke’s Hospital Pannirnng: Space for Cultural Encounter,” \textit{Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society}, 46 no 2 (Fall 2004): 118.}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{115} G.P. Mackenzie, officer in charge of the 1930 expedition, wrote to F. Crane, owner of the \textit{Beothic}, enquiring about the status of the structural changes being made on the ship to accommodate additional passengers. Mackenzie noted that “Mr. A.Y. Jackson, the artist who made the trip in 1927, wishes to go again and the Department is anxious to take him if suitable accommodation can be provided”; LAC, Northern Affairs Program, RG 85, vol. 69, file 201-1, Mackenzie to F. Crane, 5 March 1930.}
\end{footnotes}
Within the next few weeks, however, we will be hearing from the owners in this connection and will then communicate with you further.\textsuperscript{116}

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It was April when Jackson would finally receive notice that space had become available on the ship. Shortly after accepting the Department’s offer to accompany the crew on the expedition, which was expected to depart from Sydney, Nova Scotia at the end of July, Jackson wrote to Finnie that he was excited by the prospect of travelling to the Arctic again.\textsuperscript{117} “The thought of going on the Beothic again is quite thrilling to look forward to,” he wrote. “This time it will be like going with old friends.”\textsuperscript{118}

In fact, one “old friend” Jackson had hoped to see again on the Arctic patrol was Frederick Banting. Floating the idea to Finnie, Jackson explained, “[w]hen I told Dr. Banting I was going he just kind of wilted at the thought of stinking in the lab all summer… he won’t ask you if it is possible to go on the Beothic as he feels it is very uncertain whether he could go or not, but he’s raring to go…”\textsuperscript{119} Finnie, on the other hand, was mindful of the highly publicized affair that followed shortly after Banting’s return from the 1927 Arctic expedition: Banting had inadvertently disclosed to a reporter his discontent over the Hudson’s Bay Company’s mistreatment of “the Eskimos.” So he broached the subject with R.A. Gibson, Assistant Deputy Minister of the Department of the Interior, asking Gibson whether he thought the Minister would “desire that an invitation be extended to Dr. Banting”:

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{116} LAC, Northern Affairs Program, RG 85, vol. 12, file 20, A.Y. Jackson, Finnie to Jackson, 22 February 1930.
\textsuperscript{117} The expedition was expected to leave North Sydney on 31 July but would leave one day later on 1 August; LAC, Naomi Jackson Groves Fonds, MG30-D351, vol. 97, file 3, Diary 1930, 1 August 1930.
\textsuperscript{118} LAC, Northern Affairs Program, RG 85, vol. 12, file 20, A.Y. Jackson, Jackson to Finnie, 27 April 1930.
\textsuperscript{119} \textit{Ibid.}
\end{flushright}
I now have another letter from Mr. Jackson which is attached. He intimates that Dr. Banting would also appreciate another trip if he can get away from his research work when the time comes. Mr. Jackson says he will not make formal application because he does not know positively whether he can go and I imagine he has some hesitation because of the publicity which followed his last trip north.¹²⁰

Although matters concerning the “lively aftermath” that followed Banting’s admission had been settled between Banting, the Department, and the Hudson’s Bay Company at that point, the Department was undoubtedly wary that accommodating Banting on a second expedition to the Arctic could cause some unease with the Company.¹²¹ In order to extricate the Department from any potentially strained dealings with the Company, the Department decided “under the circumstances” that it should not extend an invitation to Banting at the time. Moreover, the Department could see no

¹²⁰ LAC, Northern Affairs Program, RG 85, vol. 12, file 20, A.Y. Jackson, Finnie to R.A. Gibson, 29 April 1930.
¹²¹ Banting’s remarks concerning the Hudson’s Bay Company’s mistreatment of the Inuit had also publicly exposed ongoing issues between the Canadian government and HBC practices. There were already discussions within the civil service that the government should assume responsibility of trading operations in the Eastern Arctic, due to observations made by RCMP officers, missionaries and various government officials, who were concerned over the HBC’s treatment of the Inuit population. Although not entirely the first to publically disclose some of HBC’s practices, Banting’s account was one that was most publicized due to his high profile as one of the discoverers of insulin. Because of the diplomatic delicacy of the situation, Banting agreed to meet with officials from the Hudson’s Bay Company and offer an official apology; however, there was still concern that Banting’s comments had cause irreparable damage to the Company’s image. Charles V. Sale, Governor of the Hudson’s Bay Company, criticized Banting’s broad generalizations of the Inuit and the Company’s treatment of them, which Sale stressed that Banting had done “upon a single visit to Baffin Land, of a short duration.” Sale maintained to the Department that many of Banting’s assumptions, most notably, Banting’s belief that “in a state of isolation, the Eskimo live in a happy, carefree state,” and his notion that the Hudson’s Bay Company was “exploiting” the Inuit were unfounded. For correspondence pertaining to Banting’s remarks and the ensuing meetings between the Department and the Hudson’s Bay Company see LAC, Northern Affairs Program, RG85, vol. 778, file 5713, Sir Frederick Banting, Finnie to Banting, 15 September 1927; LAC, Northern Affairs Program, RG85, vol. 778, file 5713, Sir Frederick Banting, Report, Banting to Finnie, 14 November 1927; LAC, Northern Affairs Program, RG85, vol. 778, file 5713, Sir Frederick Banting, Report, Banting to Charles V. Sale, 14 November 1927; LAC, Northern Affairs Program, RG85, vol. 2081, file 1012-4, pt. 3A, Sale to W.W. Cory, 28 February 1928, 1. For references to the government’s concerns over the Hudson’s Bay Company’s treatment of Inuit based on observations made by the RCMP and missionaries see Frank James Tester and Peter Kulchyski, Tammarniit (Mistakes): Inuit Relocation in the Eastern Arctic, 1939-63 (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1994), 109; Richard Diubaldo, The Government of Canada and the Inuit, 1900-1967 (Ottawa: Research Branch, Corporate Policy, Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 1985), 62, 68.
reason to offer him accommodation on that year’s expedition. “I discussed this with the Minister,” Gibson relayed to Finnie, “and he feels that inasmuch as there are so many eminent folk who wish to make this trip we should discourage applications for a second trip within a short time.”

While disappointed by the fact that the Department was unable to accommodate Banting on a second voyage to the Arctic, Jackson was resolved in finding room on the ship for Lawren Harris, who also expressed interest in accompanying Jackson on the expedition. Although an application would be sent to the Department by Harris in early June, noting his desire to travel as Jackson’s “working companion on the Beothic,” having “travelled and camped together in the Rocky Mts., Algoma, along the north shore of Lake Superior and the Gaspé Peninsulas and other parts of Canada for many years,” Jackson was worried that the Department might not be receptive to the idea of taking another artist on the expedition.

In a letter to Vincent Massey, Jackson expressed his concern over the Department’s more conservative attitude in providing accommodation to guests on board the ship. Hoping that Massey’s influence could facilitate Harris’s accommodation on the forthcoming Arctic expedition, Jackson requested his assistance in approaching the Department. “I find that Lawren has just been rarin [sic] to go all the time,” Jackson explained,
but would not say nothing about it for fear of hurting Banting’s chances. I can do nothing. I did not expect they would take me again, and now that they have promised to I cannot ask for more favors… Can you do anything? He must not be imposed on the expedition. It is fearfully managed business, quiet and efficient, and pressure of any kind would be resented no matter where it came from. Lawren says he would go up to Ottawa if there is any chance of going along. 125

Massey agreed with Jackson that securing accommodation for Harris on the expedition “would be an admirable thing,” and consented to write to the Department in support of Harris’s application. Aware of the Department’s interest in advancing the North to the public, Massey argued the benefits of providing passage to another artist of Jackson’s standing on the government expedition. “It occurs to me that one way by which our north can be made better known is by the work of painters who will use the scenery as their subjects,” Massey wrote to Stewart, “and I think, therefore, there is some point in giving favourable consideration to Harris’ application.” 126

Although the Department was keenly aware of the value of art in generating public interest in the Arctic after the success of the 1927 collaborative effort, the idea of taking another noted Canadian artist on the expedition intrigued the Department. In fact, heightening the Department’s interest in Harris’s application was H.O. McCurry, who championed the idea of the Department extending its invitation to Canadian artists on government expeditions. As McCurry wrote to Finnie,

If the Department finds it possible to grant this privilege, such action would have the hearty approval of the National Gallery. It is felt that the work of well-known Canadian artists in making the North better known and the work of the Canadian Government

125 University of Toronto Archives, Vincent Massey Papers, B1987-0082, box 6, Jackson to Massey, 31 May 1930.
126 University of Toronto Archives, Vincent Massey Papers, B1987-0082, box 6, Massey to Jackson, 6 June 1930.
more fully understood is an important one, in addition to the more aesthetic aspect of their activities.

While at Harvard University a week or so ago, attending the Annual Meeting of the American Art Directors Association, I found that it was the custom for the ice patrol of the United States Government to take American artists of standing on their expeditions as guests. In my opinion, the Arctic Patrol of your department is a far more important and picturesque undertaking.127

McCurry’s statement regarding the American government’s practice of accommodating artists on its Arctic expeditions would have certainly roused the attention of the Department, which was ever conscious of an American presence in the region. Anxious to expand on Canadian efforts of visually documenting and publicizing the Far North to the wider public, the Department had recently reestablished a film program in 1928, appointing Richard S. Finnie (son of O.S. Finnie) as “official historian and cinematographer.”128 It is therefore not surprising that an opportunity to expand its efforts in documenting the Arctic through art would hold particular appeal to the Department.

127 LAC, Northern Affairs Program, RG 85, vol. 69, file 201-1, McCurry to Finnie, 4 June 1930. Although it is unclear which “artists of standing” McCurry was referring to, the most noted American artists to have travelled to the Arctic were William Bradford, who travelled on several Arctic expeditions with Dr. Isaac Israel Hayes in the mid-nineteenth century; Frank Wilbert Stokes, who travelled with Robert Parry in the late-nineteenth century; and Rockwell Kent, who travelled to the Arctic in 1918-1919, and again in 1929. Kent’s highly publicized journey in 1929 was on the fishing boat Direction (which was a private venture), which sunk in a storm off Greenland in July of that year. Press reports claimed that the Boethic, which was heading to Greenland at the time on its annual patrol, would pick up the artist and his two travelling companions. For press reports on Kent see “Shipwrecked Artist Can Count on Help of Canadian Vessel,” Globe (Toronto), 26 July 1929; “Kent’s Boat Salvaged in Greenland Wreck,” New York Times, 23 July 1929.

128 Between 1922 and 1925, J.D. Craig, an advisory engineer for the Department of the Interior, and officer-in-charge of the 1922 and 1923 Eastern Arctic Patrols, supervised the production of motion pictures in the Arctic by The Canadian Government Motion Picture Bureau. In addition to the motion pictures, which were intended for educational use, professional newsreel cinematographer George Valiquette documented the 1922, 1923, and 1925 Eastern Arctic Patrols, with Roy Tash filming the 1924 patrol. The Department’s program was temporarily suspended in 1926 due to budgetary concerns, and once again in the early 1930s (as a result of the Great Depression). Peter Geller notes that a “professional cinematic record of the yearly voyage was not made until 1937…when Richard Finnie was once again engaged for the task”; Peter Geller, Northern Exposures: Photographing and Filming the Canadian North, 1920-45 (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), 39, 42, 44, 47, 137.
Convinced that taking another “eminent Canadian artist” on the expedition would assist in publicizing the Canadian North to audiences—both at home and abroad—Finnie immediately wrote to Cory concerning Harris’s application. He noted that in a recent discussion with Duncan Campbell Scott, Deputy Superintendent of the Department of Indian Affairs, Scott had suggested that it would be advantageous to include Harris on the expedition, and had urged Finnie to consider his application. “Dr. Scott pointed out the prominence of Mr. Harris as one of the foremost Canadian Artists,” Finnie explained to Cory, “and thought it would be very desirable to have him accompany the expedition with Mr. A.Y. Jackson, R.C.A., who had already been granted permission to go.”

Finnie also informed Cory that, although there had been difficulty previously in finding room for any additional passengers on that year’s expedition, he was recently apprised of the fact that “the owners of the ‘Beothic’ have erected a number of cabins on the after deck,” making it possible to add an extra passenger on the ship. “This makes 19 in all and if Mr. Harris is permitted to go it will make 20,” Finnie explained. “This number will probably cramp even the enlarged quarters but Mr. Mackenzie tells me, if the Minister is willing to permit Mr. Harris to go, we can accommodate him.”

It was on 12 June when Finnie informed Harris that the Department had approved his application to travel on the 1930 Arctic expedition. Accepting the Department’s offer

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129 LAC, Northern Affairs Program, RG 85, vol. 69, file 201-1, Finnie to Cory, 9 June 1930. Although a career bureaucrat, Duncan Campbell Scott had an interest in the arts and developed close professional and personal associations with many artists, including Harris. See Leslie, Dawn, National Visions, National Blindness: Canadian Art and Identities in the 1920s (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006), 118; Charles Hill, The Group of Seven: Art for a Nation (Ottawa: McClelland & Stewart for the National Gallery of Canada, 1995), 189.

130 LAC, Northern Affairs Program, RG 85, vol. 69, file 201-1, Finnie to Cory, 9 June 1930.

131 LAC, Northern Affairs Program, RG 85, vol. 69, file 201-1, Finnie to Harris, 12 June 1930.
to travel on the ship, Harris wrote to Finnie that he was “indeed delighted… to be a member of the expedition,” and looked forward to the prospect of sketching with Jackson in the Arctic.  

In fact, both Jackson and Harris were anxious to break the monotony of daily life—as Jackson put it, “to get away from the pessimism that came with the [G]reat [D]epression”—which had been affecting their creativity. Harris also expressed similar sentiments when he wrote to Emily Carr, of his difficulties finding inspiration to paint:

Jackson and I are going to the Arctic the end of July—on the yearly govt. expedition. I hope to get loosened up and somewhat freed from my solidifying inhibitions and more into exaltation for a time. I am in great need of losing my littleness and sharing completely in the life of the universe in water and skies and land and light.

Although the Arctic expedition presented another opportunity for Jackson to expand upon his earlier efforts of pictorializing Canada’s Far North, as well as a chance to reunite with some of his old shipmates from the 1927 patrol, for Harris, travelling to

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132 LAC, Northern Affairs Program, RG 85, vol. 69, file 201-1, Harris to Finnie, 14 June 1930. See also LAC, Northern Affairs Program, RG 85, vol. 69, file 201-1, Jackson to Mackenzie, 3 July 1930.
134 LAC, Naomi Jackson Groves Fonds, MG30-D351, vol. 95, file 18, Jackson to Naomi Jackson, 25 June 1930.
135 Art Historian Peter Larisey argues that Harris was going through “a period of change” both professionally and personally at the time. Not only was Harris experiencing difficulties painting, but he was experiencing difficulties in his marriage as well; Larisey, *Light for a Cold Land: Lawren Harris’s Work and Life—An Interpretation* (Toronto & Oxford: Dundurn Press, 1993), 107-109.
136 Harris formed a close friendship with Carr after meeting the artist in 1927 at the National Gallery of Canada’s exhibition, *Canadian West Coast Art, Native and Modern*, and had corresponded with Carr on a frequent basis. LAC, Emily Carr Fonds, MG 30-D215, vol. 2, Harris Carr Correspondence 1930, Harris to Carr, June 1930.
the farthest reaches of Canada’s North was both a personal and professional quest to seek
spiritual and creative inspiration in “the clarity and spaciousness of our north country.”

As Harris had long maintained, “the great North and its living whiteness” was not only a
source of “replenishing power,” but was a place where “Canadian character” was
“born.” And as Harris also maintained, it was the Canadian artist, “because of his
constant habit of awareness” and understanding of the land’s “moods and spirit,” who
was best “equipped to interpret” the Canadian North’s values to the nation.

However, interpreting Canada’s Far North proved to be a challenge for both
Harris and Jackson as they left North Sydney, Nova Scotia, on 1 August, on what would
be the most extensive trip the Eastern Arctic Patrol had made in one season (fig. 15).

Mirroring Jackson’s experience during the 1927 Arctic expedition, the 1930 voyage was
marked by rapidly changing climatic conditions of fog, rain, snow, and heavy ice packs,
which made it difficult for them to sketch. “We have not really started work yet, but L is

138 The “North” that Harris was referring to was a generalized reference to both Canada’s geographical
location as well as the nation’s unpopulated regions, which at the time would have even included Northern
Ontario. Harris’s notion that the Canadian North had a determining influence on “Canadian character” was
firmly enmeshed in both his theosophical beliefs and popular nationalist rhetoric of the time. Historian Cole
Harris describes how “English-speaking Canadians” in particular had subscribed to the idea that the land
determined the character of Canada. Historian Carl Berger further explains the idea that Canada’s
environment shaped the development of a hardy, virile, “northern race” was first noted during the years
after Confederation, when Robert Grant Haliburton, an associate of the Canada First Movement, claimed
that Canada’s “national character” was a product of its northern climate and natural environment. These
views were carried forward well into the twentieth century and played an influential role in the Group’s
concept of defining the nation through its distinct indigenous characteristics, in their quest to define a
distinctly “national school of art”; Cole Harris, “The Myth of the Land in Canadian Nationalism,” in
Nationalism in Canada, ed. Peter Russell (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, Ryerson Ltd., 1966), 27; Carl Berger,
“The True North Strong and Free,” in Nationalism in Canada, 5–6; Lawren Harris, “Creative Art in
Company of Canada Limited, 1929), 182, 183.
139 Like Jackson, Harris’s ideas were also in keeping with the Group’s early assertion “that an Art must
grow and flower in the land before the country will be a real home for its people,” which was espoused in
the Group’s 1920 catalogue. For Harris’s later, more personal view on the artist’s role as an “interpreter” of
the land, which was greatly influenced by his theosophical beliefs, see Harris, “Revelation of Art in
Canada,” 86.
trying out some icebergs,” Jackson wrote in his journal on 9 August.\footnote{LAC, Naomi Jackson Groves Fonds, MG30-D351, vol. 97, file 3, Diary 1930, 9 August 1930, n.p.} Two days later, Jackson would note their frustration with the limitations posed by the Arctic environment, as the ship slowly crawled northward: “This morning it looked hopeless. Heavy floe ice as far as one could see, with no opening large enough to get a canoe through. It looks like the worst pack the expedition have ever encountered.”\footnote{LAC, Naomi Jackson Groves Fonds, MG30-D351, vol. 97, file 3, Diary 1930, 11 August 1930, n.p.}

![A.Y. Jackson and Lawren Harris aboard the Beothic, Photo © Courtesy of the National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives](image)

**Figure 15.** A.Y. Jackson and Lawren Harris aboard the *Beothic*,

Because of the unusually heavy ice and fog conditions that year, visits ashore were limited. As Harris noted, both he and Jackson “usually saw the most exciting subjects while steaming through channels or while being bumped by pack ice.”\footnote{Harris, *The Story of the Group of Seven*, 24.} On many occasions, they “had time only to take rapid notes,” which Harris explained were
later “worked up into sketches, crowded in our small cabin, seated on the edge of our respective bunks with only a port-hole to let in the light.” Harris would later sum up the Arctic sketching excursion to Carr:

The Arctic was an experience. I know that if it were possible for one to go up there and take one’s time and go where one liked it would yield some fine things. But it is not possible. You’d have to charter a real ship and have it run by a real navigator who knows ice and ten million other things… Sailing a large ship across the Atlantic is the merest child’s play compared to taking a ship up into the Arctic.

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Despite the difficult working conditions, both Jackson and Harris would produce a considerable number of works from the fifty-nine-day expedition. As Jackson wrote to Finnie, a few weeks after the Beothic returned to North Sydney on 27 September, “It is still a little too soon to get a perspective on it, and a lot of our work was hit and miss stuff, but there is a lot of material which I think we can develop.” While Jackson would revisit some of his earlier studies of Arctic scenery in his picturesque renderings of Eskimo and Tent (fig. 16) and Cocked Hat Island (fig. 17), Harris, who had secured “some landscape material of mountains with snow caps and icebergs,” continued to explore the more expressive qualities of art in his Arctic works, which Jackson claimed

144 Ibid.
145 LAC, Emily Carr Fonds, MG30-D215, vol. 2, Harris Carr Correspondence 1930, Harris to Carr, 30 November 1930.
146 Harris also recorded film footage from his Arctic journey on his hand-held camera, at the insistence of his daughter, Peggy, who wished “to know what the country looks like.” Jackson wrote to Finnie that he believed that some of Harris’s footage “turned out quite well,” and thought that it might even “parallel Richard’s work.” However, Harris intended the footage to be a “family film” and was not used for any governmental or commercial purposes (as far as can be determined). The footage, approximately forty-eight minutes long, is under copyright and available for viewing at the Library and Archives Canada. For references to Harris’s film see Jackson, A Painter’s Country, 103, 106; LAC, Northern Affairs Program, RG 85, vol. 12, file 20, A.Y. Jackson, Jackson to Finnie, 11 October 1930.
147 LAC, Northern Affairs Program, RG 85, vol. 69, file 201-1, Jackson to Finnie, 11 October 1930.
would keep Harris “busy painting canvases for the next two years.”148 Redolent of Harris’s North Shore and Rocky Mountain material in his use of basic forms and dramatic use of colour and light, Harris’s Arctic Sketch XIII (fig. 18), North Shore, Baffin Island I (fig. 19), and Icebergs, Davis Strait (fig. 20) exhibit the increasingly formalist approach that Harris was taking at this stage in his career, which would eventually lead him toward abstraction a few years later.149

In keeping with their efforts “to give Canadians some idea of the strange beauty of our northern possessions,” both Jackson and Harris exhibited their Arctic works at Hart House in early November 1930.150 Touted by one reviewer as “one of the best exhibitions of recent years,” it was noted that “their sketches, some sixty-seven in number, bring us a clear impression of the majesty of our own far north, and show us the very soul of our barren land.”151 To further engage the viewer in the imagining of the Arctic region—and of the artists as its explorers—a map was also installed alongside Jackson and Harris’s sketches “to trace the wanderings of the two men” during their voyage on the government patrol.

While the Hart House exhibit was certainly successful in engaging the viewer in Canadian efforts in the North, and was favourably received by the public, it was ultimately the intention of the artists to exhibit their sketches in a larger exhibition venue.152 Lending support to this idea was Finnie, who, of course, was eager to publicize

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148 “Two Artists Return From Trip to Arctic,” Mail and Empire (Toronto), 2 October 1930; Jackson, A Painter’s Country, 111.
149 Jackson wrote that after the Arctic voyage, “Harris began moving away from natural forms and turned to non-objective art”; LAC, Naomi Jackson Groves Fonds, MG30-D351, vol. 98, file 30, “Lawren Harris,” n.d.
150 Jackson, A Painter’s Country, 111.
152 LAC, Northern Affairs Program, RG 85, vol. 69, file 201-1, Jackson to Finnie, 11 October 1930.
Figure 16. A.Y. Jackson, *Eskimo and Tent*, 1930, oil on wood panel, 21.5 x 26.7 cm, gift of Mr. S. Walter Stewart, McMichael Canadian Collection, 1968.8.7
Figure 17. A.Y. Jackson, *Cocked Hat Island*, 1930, oil on wood, 21.5 x 26.6 cm, gift from the Douglas M. Duncan Collection, 1970, National Gallery of Canada, no. 16116
Figure 18. Lawren S. Harris, *Arctic Sketch XIII*, 1930, oil on pressed board, 30.5 x 38.1 cm, gift of Agnes Etherington, 1945, Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen’s University, 00-085
Figure 19. Lawren S. Harris, *North Shore, Baffin Island I*, c. 1930, oil on canvas, 81.4 x 107.5 cm, gift of the artist, Vancouver, 1960, National Gallery of Canada, no. 5008
the Arctic works to the broader public. Enquiring into the feasibility of mounting an exhibition of Jackson and Harris’s Arctic sketches at the National Gallery, Finnie explained to Brown, “We enjoyed the last exhibition of Mr. Jackson’s pictures some years ago and I would appreciate very much the more recent sketches of Messrs. Jackson
and Harris. I am sure the public also would be interested. I hope you will do what you can to arrange for a showing in the National Gallery in the near future.”

A total of sixty-six oil sketches—thirty by Harris and thirty-six by Jackson—were mounted at the Gallery on 26 November 1930, “at the request of the Director of the North West Territories Branch, Mr. O.S. Finnie.” Also included in the exhibition was Jackson’s painting *The Beothic at Bache Post, Ellesmere Island*, which the catalogue acknowledged was “[p]resented to the National Gallery to commemorate the establishment, on August 6, 1926, of Bache Peninsula Post… visited annually by the Canadian Government Arctic expedition, which patrols the posts and waters of Canada’s most northern possessions.”

As one keen reviewer aptly put it, “The enthusiasm of two well-known Canadian painters and the fine work being done each year by the Northwest Territories and Yukon Branch of the Department of the Interior was brought to the fore today in an exhibition of Arctic sketches by A.Y. Jackson, R.C.A., and Lawren Harris, at the National Gallery.” Indeed, like the various 1927 efforts to advance the Canadian North through Jackson’s Arctic works, the display of Jackson and Harris’s Arctic works at the Gallery provided the Department and the artists with a platform to define and advance the Arctic as a Canadian possession, while generating interest in the government’s northern efforts as well as in Canadian art. During the two weeks that the sketches were on display, Jackson’s and Harris’s Arctic works “attracted a great deal of attention” to the northern expedition, and were lauded by the press and public for their unique depictions of the

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153 LAC, Northern Affairs Program, RG 85, vol. 12, file 20, A.Y. Jackson, Finnie to Brown, 13 November 1930.
“grandeur of the far north.”\textsuperscript{156} The sketches also attracted favourable attention from a number of government officials who viewed the Arctic scenes, including the Governor General and his wife, Lady Willingdon, who McCurry described as being “greatly struck with their beauty and interest.”\textsuperscript{157}

The success of the Gallery exhibition had certainly pleased Finnie. As he would express to Jackson following the closing of the exhibition in December, he was greatly impressed with the Arctic display. Not only did he believe that the art works made a favourable impression on the public, and had generated greater interest in Canadian northern efforts; Finnie also thought that the pictures had helped advance the Arctic as an integral part of the nation. As he put it,

\ldots I think a few pictures of the Arctic will help substantially to put that country on the map and to make the people of Canada realize that we have an empire in the north as well as in the southern parts of the country… there is now much more interest in the Arctic than formerly and undoubtedly your pictures have assisted substantially in creating that interest.\textsuperscript{158}

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Although there were no definite plans made between the Department and the artists to circulate the Arctic collection, an opportunity would present itself immediately following the Ottawa exhibition. A few days after the closing of the exhibit at the Gallery, McCurry received a letter from E.M. Pinkerton of the Art Association of Montreal, enquiring of the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item NGC, National Gallery Fonds, Exhibitions in Gallery, Jackson (A.Y.) & Harris, (Lawren) Arctic Sketches – 1930, v.1, McCurry to E.M. Pinkerton, 10 December 1930; “Canadian Artists Exhibit Pictures of Arctic Regions,” \textit{Ottawa Journal}, 27 November 1930.
\item Finnie, Col. Patterson Murphy, Duncan Campbell Scott, G.P. Mackenzie and Major David Livingston McKeand were noted to have attended the exhibition. Lord Willingdon was Governor General of Canada from 1926-1931. Both Lord and Lady Willingdon had a keen appreciation for the arts. NGC, National Gallery Fonds, Exhibitions in Gallery, Jackson (A.Y.) & Harris, (Lawren) Arctic Sketches – 1930, v.1, McCurry to Harris, 4 December 1930; LAC, Northern Affairs Program, RG 85, vol. 12, file 20, A.Y. Jackson, Finnie to Jackson, 31 December 1930.
\item LAC, Northern Affairs Program, RG 85, vol. 12, file 20, A.Y. Jackson, Finnie to Jackson, 31 December 1930.
\end{enumerate}
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possibility of mounting “a two week show” of the Arctic sketches in late January 1931.159 While at that point the sketches were returned to the artists in preparation for a small exhibit of “recent works” at the Lyceum Woman’s Art Association in Toronto, which was planned for early January with fellow Group members Arthur Lismer and J.E.H. MacDonald, McCurry believed that it was still possible to organize an exhibition of the Arctic collection in Montreal by the end of January.160 To facilitate the process, McCurry noted to Pinkerton that the National Gallery had “on hand” about five hundred catalogues, which the Gallery could supply to the Art Association. “I enclose a catalogue,” he explained to Pinkerton, “No. 37, by Jackson, is a large painting presented to the National Gallery by the artist a year or so ago and does not go with the collection but we should be glad to lend it to you if you have the exhibition.”161

An exhibition of Jackson and Harris’s sixty-seven Arctic works was held in the Print Room of the Art Association of Montreal from 31 January to 15 February 1931. The widely publicized exhibition, which was touted as the result of the artists’ “9,000 mile voyage to Godhavn, Greenland, and all the Canadian posts” during the Canadian government’s Arctic patrol, attracted considerable attention to the collaborative effort,

159 As the Department was so closely linked to the exhibition, Pinkerton was unsure as to whether she needed to contact Finnie regarding the matter, but McCurry told her to contact Jackson in order to coordinate the exhibition of sketches; NGC, National Gallery Fonds, Exhibitions in Gallery, Jackson (A.Y.) & Harris, (Lawren) Arctic Sketches – 1930, v.1, E.M. Pinkerton to H.O. McCurry, 9 December 1930.
160 The exhibition at the Lyceum Women’s Art Association in Toronto was mounted from 5 January to 17 January 1931 and featured the most recent works by Harris, Jackson, Lismer and MacDonald. Both Jackson and Harris exhibited their Arctic sketches; Lismer exhibited his works of the Atlantic Provinces, and MacDonald exhibited his sketches “done in the Rockies” over the summer; “Arctic Paintings Exhibited at Club, New Pictures by Arthur Lismer and J.E. H. MacDonald Shown,” Mail and Empire (Toronto), 6 January 1931.
with one Vancouver reviewer heralding the Arctic display “as one of the most interesting shows of the season.”162

However, Montreal critics were not so enthralled. Never fully accepted by Montreal’s conservative art establishment, some of the Group’s staunchest critics greeted Jackson and Harris’s latest works with barbs.163 As one Montreal reviewer wrote, Jackson and Harris’s Arctic scenes made it “almost impossible to believe that their pictures deal with the same country,” with some of the sketches appearing “almost like unrelieved grey rectangles.”164 Samuel Morgan-Powell, a longstanding critic of the Group, and of modernist art, also wrote a particularly scathing review of the artists’ Arctic sketches, describing both their works as “decorative in composition,” and neither creating “an impression of reality.” As Morgan-Powell declared: “The spectator can take his choice, but nothing he will see in the Print Room is likely to encourage him to take a trip to the Arctic.”165 But despite harsh reviews from some critics, negative publicity did little to deter a public eager to see the Arctic works and had clearly generated greater interest in the artists’ “graphic impression” of the Canadian North. By the closing of the exhibit, Jackson and Harris’ Arctic sketches of “grey rectangles,” “leaden skies,” “muddy snow,” and “barren rock,” attracted a number of visitors during the two-week display, and were

163 The Group had a difficult time with some Montreal critics. As Jackson himself noted in a 1927 interview, the Group and other “trailblazing” artists had a difficult time exhibiting in Montreal because of the city’s more conservative art establishment. See C.R. Greenaway, “Jackson Says Montreal Most Bigoted City,” Toronto Daily Star, 10 September 1927.
164 The reviewer was particularly harsh on Jackson’s works see “Sketches Exhibited of Canadian Arctic,” Montreal Gazette, 2 February 1931.
“favourably commented on” by the general public, as the Art Association would report. 166

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There were two additional exhibitions scheduled for 1931. Exhibitions of Jackson and Harris’s Arctic works were mounted at the Art Gallery of Toronto in May 1931, and at the Canadian Pacific Exhibition held in Vancouver in late August 1931. But by this time rhetoric surrounding the Department’s involvement in the sketching expedition was largely absent from the press accounts and exhibition catalogues. 167 The Great Depression would eventually take its toll on the Department, and by the summer of 1931 the Northwest Territories and Yukon Branch of the Department of the Interior was dramatically restructured under new restraint measures enforced by R.B. Bennett’s administration. Among those who lost their positions in the Department were Finnie and Mackenzie, thereby ending any further possibility of advancing the Department’s northern efforts through the art works. 168

166 “Sketches Exhibited of Canadian Arctic,” Montreal Gazette, 2 February 1931; Saturday Night 46, no, 3: (7 March 1931).


168 Charles Stewart left his position in 1930, after serving Prime Minister King, and W.W. Cory retired in 1931. Geller notes that after “the administrative retrenchment of the early 1930s, visual documentation of the [Eastern Arctic Patrols] were significantly reduced.” McKeand would assume the role as a senior bureaucrat of the Department, but “displayed little enthusiasm for the visual promotion of northern administration”; Geller, Northern Exposures, 47-48. For other references concerning the restructuring of the Department see Diamond Jenness, Eskimo Administration: II. Canada (Montreal: The Arctic Institute
While there were also plans to circulate Jackson and Harris’s Arctic collection in the United States in 1932, those plans would fall through.\textsuperscript{169} With the sudden reorganization of the Department, and shifting interests of the artists—the Group would also undergo their own organizational changes with the Group’s decision to “expand” their membership in December 1931—Jackson and Harris would no longer find it viable to exhibit their Arctic collection, ultimately bringing their tour of their Arctic works to a close.\textsuperscript{170}

To a large extent Jackson and Harris’s 1930 sketching expedition and subsequent exhibitions were an extension of the Department and Jackson’s 1927 efforts to generate popular interest in the Canadian North, and were part of a larger process of engaging the wider public in the imagining of the Arctic as a Canadian possession. Like the 1927 efforts, the 1930-1931 Arctic exhibitions also provided both the Department and the artists a platform to define and advance the Arctic to the broader public, while generating greater awareness in the government’s northern efforts as well as Canadian art. However,

\textsuperscript{169}The following galleries expressed interest in exhibiting Jackson and Harris’s Arctic collection: The Albright Gallery in Buffalo, New York; The Memorial Art Gallery in Rochester, New York; The Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts in Columbus, Ohio; and the Faulkner Memorial Gallery, Santa Barbara California. For correspondence concerning the proposed exhibitions see Art Gallery of Ontario, Edward P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, A4.2.5, Exhibitions, 1931, Arctic Sketches by Lawren Harris and A.Y. Jackson, Gertrude Herdle to Fred Haines, 19 May 1931; Secretary to the Curator to Gertrude Herdle, 30 May 1931; William Hekking to Haines, 22 June 1931; Karl Bolander to Haines, 23 June 1931; Haines to Bolander, 25 June 1931; Haines to Hekking, 26 June 1931; Haines to Herdle, 8 July 1931; Frances B. Linn to Haines, 27 October 1931.

\textsuperscript{170}The Group’s last official exhibition was held at the Art Gallery of Toronto in December 1931. After the opening of show the Group decided to expand and include new members. The Group would formally disband in 1933 with the forming of the Canadian Group of Painters. The early 1930s was also a period of personal change for both Jackson and Harris. In April 1932, Jackson’s younger sister took her own life and in June of that year, Jackson’s father died. The death of fellow Group member J.E.H. MacDonald in November 1932 was particularly devastating for Group members as well. Harris spent the summer of 1932 sketching at Point au Baril on Georgian Bay, but was going through a period of spiritual and creative malaise and had done very little painting at the time. He would move into abstraction by 1934; Dennis Reid, \textit{Alberta Rhythm: The Later Work of A.Y. Jackson} (Toronto: The Art Gallery of Ontario, 1982), 11, 14; Jeremy Adamson, \textit{Lawren S. Harris: Urban Scenes and Wilderness Landscapes, 1906-1930} (Toronto: The Art Gallery of Ontario, 1978), 200.
it can be considered that the 1930-1931 Arctic exhibits also marked the culmination of
Canadian sovereignty efforts in the North as well. In November of 1930, Norway
formally recognized Canadian sovereignty over the disputed Sverdrup Islands, and any
potential claims that Denmark and the United States may have had to the Arctic islands
during the 1920s were “nullified” by effective acts of Canadian occupation and
administration in the region, leaving Canadian Arctic claims unchallenged by any foreign
power by this time.\textsuperscript{171}

Despite Canada’s apparent advances in securing political recognition over the
Arctic islands, the Department’s Eastern Arctic Patrols continued to play a vital role in
maintaining effective Canadian control over the region well into the decade and
beyond.\textsuperscript{172} But as Jackson succinctly expressed decades later, artists also had a vital role
to play in the nation’s narrative, visibly defining and personifying the nation’s values and
successes to not only its own citizens, but to other nations as well:

We have great wealth and resources; we are respected as a nation; all over the Western world there is a feeling of goodwill toward us. If we are to uphold this reputation we must bear in mind that all countries that have made their mark in history have left a record of themselves through their sculptors and architects, their painters, poets and composers, and others endowed with creative spirit.\textsuperscript{173}

\textsuperscript{171} V. Kenneth Johnston, “Canada’s Title to the Arctic Islands,” \textit{Canadian Historical Review} 14, no.1 (March 1933): 40-41.
\textsuperscript{172} The \textit{Beothic} patrolled the region for six seasons and was later replaced by the S.S. \textit{Ungava} in 1932, and by the S.S. \textit{Nascopie} from 1933-1947. The era of Eastern Arctic patrols were “annual” until the patrol ship \textit{Nascopie} sank in July 1947. It was not until 1950 that the patrols resumed due to post-war concerns; however, they were discontinued in 1968 when the Canadian government determined that the region could be better serviced by air. See C.S. Mackinnon, “Canada’s Eastern Arctic Patrol 1922-68,” \textit{Polar Record} 27, no. 161 (1991): 93-101.
\textsuperscript{173} Jackson, \textit{A Painter’s Country}, 161. Canadian communications theorist Harold A. Innis also argued that culture is used by a nation to not only communicate its values to its citizens, but communicates to other nations of its “uniqueness” and “superiority” to others. Innis stated that cultural activity, which is evident in its monuments and arts, is “capable of impressing peoples over a wide area, designed to emphasize prestige. It becomes an index of power”; Harold A. Innis, \textit{The Bias of Communication} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964), 132, 133.
Ultimately, Jackson’s and Harris’s pictorial records of the Arctic not only played a vital role in establishing the Canadian North in the public mind, but their works served as invaluable documents of Canadian efforts in the North, serving as a reminder of “Canada’s watchful care” over the region for its citizens and other nations as well.
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