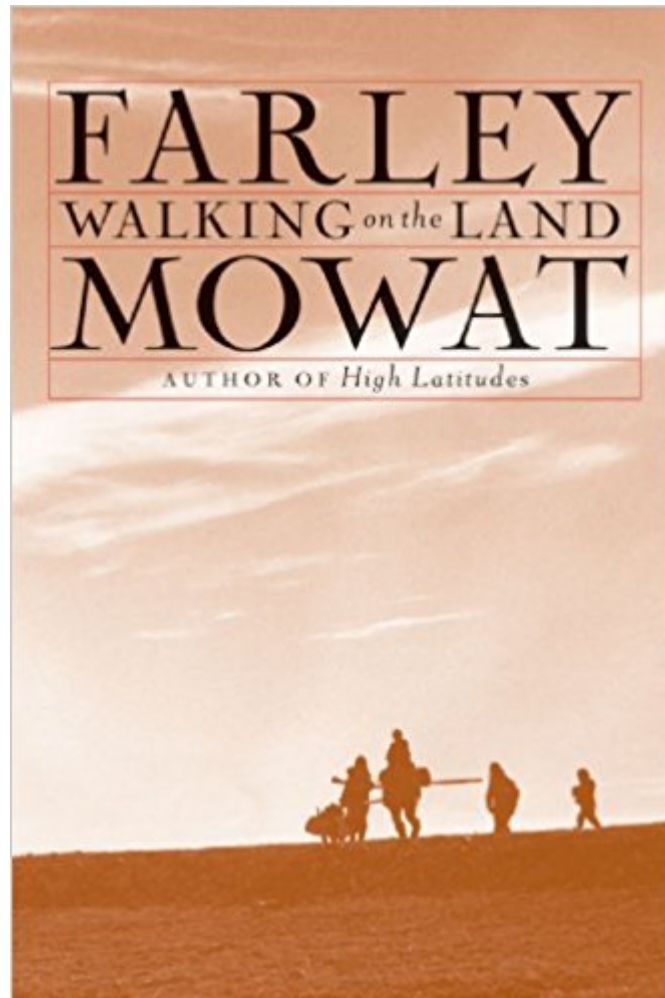




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# Walking On The Land



## Synopsis

Using one of his own trips through the Eastern Arctic as a starting point, Farley Mowat interweaves the stories of the Barren Ground Inuit with stunning, lyrical descriptions of the Northern landscape. With great beauty and terrible anguish, Mowat traces the history of the Inuit, revealing how the arrival of the Kabloonait — a white man — in the early part of the century and the subsequent obliteration of the caribou herds combined to unleash a series of famines and epidemics that virtually wiped out the Barren Ground Inuit population. Full of larger-than-life characters — old-time Hudson's Bay company men, eccentric priests, wild bush pilots and well-meaning interlopers — *Walking on the Land* is an unforgettable account by one of Canada's most committed and impassioned voices.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In *Walking on the Land*, a third chronicle of the embattled, exiled Ihalmiut people of the Arctic, Farley Mowat (Never Cry Wolf) aims "to help ensure that man's inhumane acts are not expunged from memory, thereby easing the way for repetitions of such horrors." After reading Mowat's *The Desperate People*, an Ihalmiut woman raised after the 1957 removal of her people from their home sought him out for further information, resulting in this account of the Ihalmiut's tragic plight. His earlier reports of Ihalmiut culture and the "unwitting genocide" waged on them by government, commerce and missionaries were received with accusations of falsity, denials that the Ihalmiut existed or dismissive silence. Mowat's typically lively, sensitive, plainspoken book traces

responsible and victimized parties through devastating misunderstanding and mistreatment.

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Canadian naturalist and Arctic specialist Mowat started his career 50 years ago with the publication of *People of the Deer*, which described the lives and customs of the Ihalmuit (Barren Ground Inuit), with whom he lived for two years, and also helped bring attention to their "unwitting genocide" by establishment institutions. Some 30 years later, Mowat wrote another influential book, *Sea of Slaughter*, which focused on environmental destruction along the northern Atlantic seaboard. Now, in this passionate account, the prolific author of 30 books revisits the controversial subject and place and learns that his past predictions of tribal decline have been fulfilled as he again witnesses disease, starvation, and violence. Known for his extraordinary storytelling, Mowat presents a multigenerational viewpoint through his accounts of Hudson Bay men, missionaries, and other Arctic people as he subtly describes the desolate landscape. Recommended for public libraries. Margaret W. Norton, Oak Park, IL Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Everything Farley Mowat writes is gold! After "Never Cry Wolf", the movie, I read all of his books. Spoiler: if you needed to know how to eat a mouse, this is the book for you.

Pros: Very honest, very real, well-written, some interesting stories  
Cons: Boring to me, did not interest my 18-year-old son and would not interest junior high students (although it is 8.8 AR level) but did interest my son in his mid-20's; many swear words; graphic descriptions of at least 2 murders (I quit half-way through the book); negative viewpoints of missionaries  
You may enjoy the book, but if you're considering getting it for children, keep the above in mind...

An extraordinary story of the north expertly told by Mowat as usual based on a mix of personal experience and history.

GETS BETTER ALL THE TIME THANK YOU AWC

Farley Mowat's description of the high arctic and the people who inhabit the area is excellent, if often grim. He does not spare the reader the difficulties of survival in a harsh environment.

Mowat once again deals with the subjugation of Inuit peoples by the Canadian government, the

Episcopal and Catholic churches as well as various companies who decide there's big money to be made in the arctic. The government ignores pleas that Inuits are facing starvation and medical crises. Churches try to convert and some officials feel justified in relocating children to specialized schools. Company employees exploit native women for sexual favors in exchange for food for their starving families. There are some good guys here but they are few and far between. Mowat has written a series on this subject which include "People of the Deer" and "The Desperate People" all of which report the history, mythology, customs, habits etc of the Ihalmuit people who lived in what is now the new Canadian province of Nunavut-just north of Manitoba. Various pressures, the greatest being starvation, reduced their numbers to less than 200. They were relocated as is related in this book to a coastal region which they were unused to and were not adapted to surviving there. This was another government folly. The Canadians came later to their own chapter in conquering native peoples as this takes place in the 1950's. I say this as a general term because there were and are Canadians who appreciate Inuit culture and attempted to intervene. Mowat himself was not well liked by any of the major players in those episodes which he is very candid about. I am totally hooked on Mowat's work. He is a cultural anthropologist but he's such an adventure writer, a person gets so caught up in the unfolding drama. The characters are so richly portrayed and their customs explained so well that their way of life as it was will forever be recorded in his books even if it has disappeared. By the way "walking on the land" refers to an Inuit custom of going out into the cold to die. It was done by gracious elders whose younger families faced starvation in order to save children. It was also done by people who felt they had outlived their usefulness.

When I was a boy in the 1950s I read Farley Mowat's "People of the Deer" serialized in an outdoor magazine. That I remember the book 50 years later testifies to Mowat's narrative power in telling the story of the near extinction of the Ihalmuit people in far northern Canada. The Ihalmuit are Eskimos (Innu) but unlike their sea-dwelling relatives live inland and depend on the barren ground caribou for their sustenance. Mowat is the indispensable source of information for the Ihalmuit and turned out a classic in "People of the Deer." In "Talking to the Land" Mowat describes his revisit to the Ihalmuit in 1959. This book lacks the high adventure of "People of the Deer." It indicts the Canadian government, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Catholic missionaries, and big business for their uncaring and criminally stupid behavior in dealing with the Ihalmuit. There are many vivid scenes and characters in this short book. The most touching describes his meeting with the last survivor of the Ihalmuit who sought him out in 1999 and inspired him to write this book. Mowat is a gifted advocate and writer, but I won't give him top marks because his reputation is that of a subjective

writer, striving for effect and impact rather than objective truth. Knowing that, I am sympathetic with his views but also a little mistrustful. Did he really have the experiences he describes? Is his assessment of the situation that led to the extinction of the Ihalmuit accurate? Can he be trusted or is he a teller of tales masquerading as a writer of fact? Smallchief

With gritty and brutal honesty, Farley Mowat carries the reader back to the Arctic regions in a follow up to PEOPLE OF THE DEER and A DESPERATE PEOPLE and the treatment/mistreatment of the natives by the Canadian government and church authorities. Mr. Mowat paints a vivid picture of the arctic region and the various boondoggles designed to "help" the native peoples (which certainly parallels the wretched treatment of Native Americans in this country). What was particularly shocking was that much of this happened in the 1950s. While the subject matter can't always be defined as enjoyable, I did enjoy this armchair travel with the amazing Mr. Mowat.-Mamalinda

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