

J. Ross Mackay O.C.

31 Dec. 1915 – 28 Oct. 2014

Ross Mackay, the world's leading expert on permafrost, passed away peacefully in his sleep in the early morning of 28 October. He was 98.

For 60 years, 1951-2011, he travelled to the Arctic to study the development and behaviour of frozen ground. He was known worldwide for his studies on pingos and tundra polygons, and honoured with the Order of Canada. He received awards from Russia, China, Europe, and the United States for his contributions to northern science. Many people in Aklavik, Inuvik, Tuktoyaktuk, and, especially, Paulatuk remember and recognize his name.

During his first summer in the North, he walked with his assistants Joe Thrasher and Keith Fraser south from Paulatuk to the Horton River and east to the Brock and Hornaday rivers. They had no maps or radios. Pack dogs carried their loads. These journeys began life-long friendships with the people of Paulatuk and the western Arctic.

Ross served in the Intelligence Corps of the Canadian army during WW2 as a code breaker, rising to the rank of Major after enlisting as a Private. He cracked Japanese codes used in the islands north of Australia. At the end

of the war, an American General told him that his work had saved a Division.

His dearly loved wife Violet passed away in 1997. He leaves his daughters Anne (John Bellamy) and Leslie Jenkins (Dave), two grandchildren, two great grandchildren, and his adoptive family, the Kennedys.

Recognition of Ross's scientific contributions to the western Arctic will be an important part of the celebration in November of the Inuvik Research Centre's 50 years of operation. He was there when the Centre was founded in 1964 and came back for 47 of those 50 years.

He will be sorely missed by his family, his friends, and his colleagues, but his legacy will be unsurpassed for a very long time.

