

### CANADA'S ARCTIC POPULATION

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"Because of the keen interest of members in the well-being of Eskimos, I think it might be interesting to pause for a moment to consider the place of Eskimo art in Arctic development. We all recognize the foremost importance of art as an expression of a people. The particular cultural and intellectual talents of the Eskimos have very often been recognized through their art by those who have no other acquaintance with the Eskimo. The art is therefore a tribute to the character and abilities of a people, as well as a contribution to the cultural life of the Territories and of the country as a whole.

"It would, of course, be wrong to overlook the economic importance of Eskimo art; this is now very great indeed. Before a southern market was developed for Eskimo arts and crafts, the income from them was insignificant. With the establishment of that market and with increased activity by Eskimo artists and artisans, arts and crafts are now bringing the Eskimo people of the Territories a much-needed quarter of a million dollars a year. In the Eastern Arctic as a whole, arts and crafts yield an annual income approaching that from the fur trade. The income from arts and crafts is rising rapidly each year, and there seems every prospect that it will continue to do so.

#### HIGH QUALITY MAINTAINED

"Whether one thinks of the artistic or of the economic aspects of Eskimo art, one must wonder about the future. It is sometimes suggested that standards of Eskimo art are deteriorating and that soon it will be worth little. I do not think that any members of the Council would reach this conclusion after seeing the current examples of Eskimo art in this very community. Indeed, some of the finest Arctic carving has been created within the past 12 months. Some of it is by older artists and some of it by relative beginners.

"Undoubtedly, some indifferent carving has reached southern markets. I can say with both humility and confidence that some very indifferent painting by southern artists also reaches those markets. The Eskimos have wisely resisted the temptation to produce large numbers of duplicates or to seek a rapid return by carving objects of utility which might become fads with lucrative return but no lasting value. I do not think that we need worry that some indifferent pieces may reach the market, for the apprentice carver of today may be the master of tomorrow. What is most important is that there continue to be created each year many pieces of vitality and excellence. This is undoubtedly what is happening.

#### EFFECTS OF PROSPERITY

"There are those who have expressed concern that the changing way of life of the Eskimos may destroy their art. They suggest that the art is the expression of a primitive people, and that it cannot last after members of the community have become

accustomed to higher material standards of living, decent housing, schooling, and so on. It is of course true that in every society art is a reflexion of the way of life. Thus there is no doubt that the art of the Eskimos will change. I think it would be wrong to conclude from this that it will be destroyed or even to assume that it will deteriorate.

"The history of graphic art in Cape Dorset is an interesting case in point. When the life of the Eskimos was relatively primitive, no sealskin or stonecut prints could have been produced. One cannot make prints in a traditional snow house. It was only after the Eskimos had suitable space and materials that they could work in this art form.

"After the way of life of the Cape Dorset people began to change, therefore, their artistic tradition was certainly not destroyed. On the contrary, they took advantage of new opportunities to enrich it. I do not suggest that every community of the Arctic will create new arts in response to changes in material standards. I do think, however, that it is quite safe to conclude that Eskimo artistic talents can and do flourish amid changing circumstances. It is demonstrably wrong to conclude that art is only a product of a primitive society. We do not consider this to be so for ourselves, and there is no reason to assume it is so for the Eskimos.

"Perhaps there is a tendency occasionally to underestimate the perceptiveness and range of interests of the Eskimo and other residents of the Eastern Arctic. Two recent events indicate that, in some respects at least, these people are prepared to play an active part in the affairs of the Territories and of Canada.

"Last June, the residents of the Districts of Keewatin and Franklin voted for the first time in a federal election. About 2,600 votes were cast in this area, which was added earlier this year to the former constituency of Mackenzie River. The total population added is about 7,000. When account is taken of the number of people below voting age, and of others in very small encampments where no poll could be established, it is apparent that most of the electorate who had a reasonable opportunity to vote did so.

"The other incident will be of more direct interest to this Council. Following our January session, it was suggested that we try to secure the views of the residents on an appropriate name for the proposed new Arctic territory. A circular was accordingly prepared in English and Eskimo, and distributed widely throughout the area. I am sure you will be startled to learn — as I was — that over 1000 replies have been received, most of them from Eskimos. This represents an even wider sampling of opinion, since some of the answers reflect the consensus of a group, rather than the views of just one individual... This response — and the number of votes cast in the federal election — must surely be taken to indicate very considerable willingness to participate actively in the responsibilities of citizenship..."