

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 53/1

THE ESKIMOS: A CANADIAN HUMAN RESOURCE

An address by the Minister of Resources and Development, Mr. R.H. Winters, delivered at the Annual Convention of the Canadian Construction Association, Montreal, January 19, 1953.

... In the Department of Resources and Development we administer the affairs of the Yukon and the Northwest Territories and, therefore, have a certain responsibility for all people living there. In this capacity we look after the welfare of Eskimos, most of whom live in the Northwest Territories. We're also responsible for the education of the 2,000 Eskimos in Northern Quebec, and through the Newfoundland Government we provide relief, when necessary, for the 850 Eskimos in Labrador.

Eskimos - Fellow Canadians

The Eskimos are only a fragment of our total population - 9,500 out of 14,500,000 - but we who come in relatively close contact with them know that they are a most intriguing segment of Canada's population. They, together with the Indians, represent the original inhabitants of Canada, and they have fired the imagination of many people by maintaining their existence against a harsh unrelenting climate in a region where food, being almost entirely fish or animal, requires great skill to obtain, and is most unpredictable in its availability. Caribou, for example, which are a staple of the Eskimo's economy, have a most exasperating habit of changing their migration routes from year to year. In a country where there are only a handful of people scattered over regions of thousands of square miles, a small variation in the route of the caribou can spell the difference between plenty and starvation to the families which are dependent upon them for food.

These people have the privilege of voting; they are given Family Allowances, old age pensions and other benefits of Canadian citizenship. This would not be understood abroad having regard to geography, climate, human characteristics and habit, and a variety of other considerations, it is our problem to see to it that these Canadians - the Eskimos - derive the benefits of Canadian citizens and that they are integrated in the most useful and appropriate way into Canada's life.

One characteristic of the Eskimo which has perhaps contributed more than anything else to his survival in such trying conditions has been his innate ability as an engineer - and particularly, you may be interested to know, as a construction engineer. Take the case of the snow house, the igloo. Architects and engineers have given