

It was through the whalers that most of the Eskimos were introduced to the use of wooden whale-boats, firearms, foreign clothing, foods, tools and utensils, and tobacco. From these white men they got their first glimpse of a system of hunting entirely different from their own.

When a vessel intended to operate in areas where there were no Eskimos, large numbers - men, women and children - would be picked up in the early summer and returned again in the autumn if the vessel did not winter. If it did winter, the Eskimos either stayed aboard or lived nearby until the following season. They received little payment for their services but were assured of meat when whaling was successful. Even in the worst times they were usually given enough food and other stores to tide them over. Some fell heir to whale-boats, and most of the men acquired rifles, ammunition, clothing, and tools. The women obtained knives, cooking utensils, needles, and matches. After a century of slaughter, the demand for whalebone declined and the days of whaling came to an end, but the Eskimos emerged better equipped in many ways to make a living in their own country.

The only considerable groups of Eskimos who had not been affected by contact either with the whalers or the Hudson's Bay Company, up to the beginning of the present century, were those inhabiting the hinterlands of the Keewatin and Mackenzie Districts and the easterly coastal areas of the Western Arctic.

Although the Hudson's Bay Company had been trading throughout Southern and Western Canada for about two and a half centuries, and had ships passing through Hudson Strait every year during that time, it was not until 1909 that the possibility of extending operations into the land of the Eskimo began to be taken seriously in London. The first trading-post in exclusively Eskimo territory was established at Wolstenholme on the south side of the Hudson Strait. As early as the nineteenth century the influence of Fort Chimo (1830) and Little Whale River (1854) had been felt along the whole coast between these two places.

By 1923, a chain of trading-posts had been built along both shores of Hudson Strait, down the east coast of Hudson Bay to Port Harrison, and up the west coast of Hudson Bay to Repulse Bay. A similar development took place in the Western Arctic. By 1937, what was then considered adequate coverage was made of all the inhabited areas of the Canadian Arctic. The Hudson's Bay Company now has some 30 posts in Arctic regions.

The transition of the Eskimos from their primitive state, when they were entirely dependent on the resources of the country and their own enterprise for the fulfilment of their needs, down to the present day, when they have all come to rely, in varying degrees, on imported goods and outside services, has been a gradual one, spread over a little more than a century.

Their introduction to the use of firearms was probably, of all the innovations, the one that had the greatest effect on their daily lives. Although the rifles and guns they received during the early years were generally of low power and obsolete design, they were infinitely more effective for hunting than the bow and arrow and other primitive weapons. Throughout