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## THE ESKIMOS OF CANADA

According to early accounts, the Canadian Eskimos once ranged farther south than they do now, particularly on the Atlantic seaboard. Early in the seventeenth century they were reported as far south as the north shore of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and they occupied the whole coast of Labrador. In Hudson Bay they do not seem to have gone much farther south than Cape Jones on the east side or Churchill on the west.

The Eskimos are mainly a coastal people. They settled by the sea; seals, walrus, fish, polar bears and whales were their source of food, fuel and clothing. Centuries ago one group, however, broke away from the others to follow the caribou herds to the interior, where they formed a culture that was much different and more primitive. They lived on the caribou herds and fish from the inland lakes; they made fires from shrubs instead of blubber and rarely visited the sea.

The early explorers of the Canadian Arctic met these Eskimos from time to time over a period of some 300 years but had few dealings with them. Development in Arctic Canada came at a much later date than in other Arctic lands. While their cousins in other countries were trading with white men, many Eskimos did not dream that any men except themselves existed. They called themselves Innuït, meaning "The People" -- the only people.

### Coming of the Whalers

It was not until the arrival of the whalers early in the nineteenth century that any change began to take place. By the end of the century the Eskimo people, through their dealings with the whalers, had moved into a position of some dependence upon white man's goods and supplies. The old Stone-Age wandering life was becoming less attractive.

In 1821, British whaling ships ventured north into Davis Strait and Baffin Bay, and United States vessels followed. Steam supplanted sail, and, in the 1860s, the hunt for whales spread into nearly all the navigable waters of the Eastern Arctic. In the next decade, the pressure on the whale population showed its effects and the United States whalers turned their attention to the West, thus coming in touch with the nomadic Eskimos of the western extremes of the Canadian Arctic.