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INDIAN HANDICRAFTS THRIVE

In handicrafts the Indians of Canada have a "cottage industry" of considerable potential value. While craft work has long been an important source of supplementary income to many people, it can now provide full-time employment to those with artistic ability and skill. This is particularly important to craftsmen who live in remote areas where other opportunities to earn a living are limited. Handicraft production permits craftsmen to live and work wherever they wish — either in urban communities or in rural areas — yet be assured of markets for their work.

Indian handicrafts have always been popular with visitors to Canada. Now, with the great expansion of the tourist trade, craft work is in greater demand than ever. In addition, overseas outlets are offering a new market.

Demand is not restricted to such traditional Indian art as birch-bark canoes and moccasins — though the popularity of these products remains constant — but is also increasing for a variety of other types of articles with Indian motifs. For instance, many inquiries have been made by interior decorators and commercial firms of the United States for tapestries decorated with Indian designs for use as drapes, chair covers, etc.

only 60 per cent of the orders received in 1961 could be filled because of the limited supply, warehouse sales are increasing yearly in volume and value.

In the nine months from April 1 to December 31, 1962, the value of orders shipped was \$19,394, compared to a total of \$15,410-worth of orders shipped for the 12 months of the fiscal year ended March 31, 1962. It is to be noted, however, that craftsmen may forward their wares for sale to this centre only after they have submitted samples of their work and, in return, have received definite orders for production.

Arrangements have also been made with the Newfoundland, Quebec and Ontario governments for purchases of moose hides. These are processed by tanneries to the colour and texture of Indian-tanned hides and are shipped to areas where materials are in short supply.

CO-OPERATIVES

Two co-operatives handle the handicrafts produced by members. These are the Yukon Indian-craft Co-operative Association and the Lac La Ronge Handicraft Co-operative, Saskatchewan.

The former, established in May 1962, is producing a wide variety of articles. It has 165 members and sold \$10,000 worth of handicraft articles in the first four months of operation.

The Lac La Ronge co-operative has provincial sponsorship. While the membership is predominantly Indian, a number of Métis are also members. The

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