

selves. Their isolation helps explain why they called themselves Inuit—"the people", the only people.

Coming of the whalers

As early as 1821, British whalers ventured north into Davis Strait and Baffin Bay; whalers from the United States soon followed. By the 1860s, the whale hunt had spread into nearly all the navigable waters of the eastern Arctic. During the next decade, the hunt took such a toll of whales in this region that the American whalers began to turn their eyes westward, and so came into contact with the nomadic Eskimos of the western Arctic.

From the Scottish and American whalers the Eskimos acquired a knowledge of wooden boats, firearms and tobacco, as well as European clothing, food tools and utensils.

Trade brought with it diseases such as measles, smallpox and diphtheria. The Inuit learned a more efficient way of hunting and fishing when they acquired rifles, ammunition and clothing and tools that differed greatly from those with which they were familiar.

Inuit families were employed by whalers to man boats and to help run shore stations. When a ship was about to venture into areas where there were no Eskimos, large numbers of native men, women and children were taken aboard during the early summer. In the autumn, if the

whaler did not winter on the new whaling-ground, the Inuit were returned to their home territory.

If the ship did winter, the natives either remained on board or lived nearby until the following season. Though they received little or no payment for their services, they were assured of plenty of meat as long as the whaling was successful. Even during the unprofitable season, they were usually given sufficient food and other supplies to tide them over. Some fell heir to whaling-boats. After about a century of prosperity, the whaling industry came to an end in the Canadian Arctic. The Eskimos emerged better equipped in many ways to make a living on their own land.

Just as the bottom dropped out of the whaling market, the value of white fox fur soared to levels that made the operation of Arctic trading posts commercially feasible. Many whalers turned traders as the interests of the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) shifted north to the tundra. In the long run, the influence of the trader on the Inuit was far more extensive than the whaler's had been.

The first trading-post in Eskimo territory was established at Wolstenholme on the south side of Hudson Strait. The influence of Fort Chimo (1830) and Little Whale River (1854) was felt along the stretch of coast between the two places. By the 1930s, the Arctic regions were covered by a network of trading-posts