

"I will hunt a big caribou". In this way one long word in Eskimo can take the place of a whole sentence in English. The most remarkable thing about the Eskimo language is its uniformity over a wide area — an Eskimo from Greenland in the east can make himself understood, though with some difficulty, all the way to Bering Strait, three or four thousand miles away. From Greenland to Norton Sound in Alaska there are only comparatively minor differences in the language. South of Norton Sound and in Siberia, however, a very different situation exists. There are several distinct dialects and an Eskimo living there cannot be understood by those who live north of Norton Sound. Aleut, the language spoken by the Aleuts of the Aleutian Islands, is now recognized to be an Eskimo language, but it is so different that it was once considered to be a completely separate language.

[PHYSICAL TYPE]



The physical type of the Eskimos is distinctive. Like all Mongoloid people, they have straight black hair, dark brown eyes, high cheekbones, and wide faces. Their skin is yellowish-brown, but it is surprisingly light, lighter than one would expect from their faces, which are usually sunburnt from the sun on the snow and ice. The babies often have a well defined blue patch at the base of the spine which disappears after a year or two. The Eskimos have shorter arms and legs than the North American Indians, and are therefore rather smaller in stature, but they are not in fact a short race by anthropological standards, and they are as tall as people in many places in western Europe. They are muscular and well-covered and this, together with their bulky and loose-fitted clothes and rather short legs, makes them appear to be stout, but this is a false impression. The ratio of skull breadth to length shows that they are mainly long-headed or dolichocephalic, except in the southwest, where the number of broad-headed Eskimos increases until in the Aleutians the population is as definitely broad-headed as the central Eskimos and Greenlanders are narrow-headed. The Eskimo skull is unmistakable to a physical anthropologist and has a number of distinctive features that make it easy to recognize. As well as being long and narrow, it is high and has a pronounced longitudinal ridge from front to back, and at the back there is a marked protrusion. The cranial capacity is large, and the nose is very narrow, narrower than in any other people. The

cheekbones are high and prominent and the face is wider than the skull itself and has a squarish shape. To white men all Eskimos seem to look the same at first, just as white men all look the same to Eskimos. Their faces are really, however, very different and they range from the rounded cheerful face so often illustrated to the narrow more dignified oval-shaped face with a well-marked nose usually regarded as being North American Indian.

[THE ESKIMO CULTURE]

There have been many changes in the north in recent years and this has affected almost every aspect of the lives of the Eskimos. The following paragraphs describe how they lived before these changes began. The Eskimos had evolved a remarkable and distinctive culture that enabled them to survive under more extreme conditions than any other race. The typical form of the culture was the arctic form which was found among the majority of the Canadian Eskimos. Except in the summer, it was an ice-hunting culture, based on hunting sea mammals either through the ice at their breathing holes, from the ice at the flow-edge, or on the ice when the seals lay enjoying the sunshine in the spring. The sea mammals provided the Eskimos with meat for food, oil for heat and light, and skins for many purposes. For this hunting the Eskimos had dogs and sledges, and since there was little else to use in the way of building materials, they lived in snow houses.

In the short summer, sea mammals were again hunted, but from kayaks and umiaks, or later often from canoes and whale boats, and the Eskimos lived in tents. At this time, too, fish were speared in the rivers and, more important, caribou were hunted, partly for their meat, but particularly for their skins which provided splendid winter clothing. Nothing made in civilization is as warm, as light, or as comfortable for the Arctic winter as the Eskimo skin clothing.

This physical arctic form of Eskimo life was necessarily modified where conditions were not typically Arctic. The most northern Eskimo, the Thule Eskimos of Greenland, had so little summer that the summer phase was less important. In fact the kayak, the fish spear, and the bow and arrow, all of which are associated with the summer phase, had been forgotten and were unknown to the Thule Eskimos when they were discovered by Ross in 1818. They were reintroduced by immigrant Eskimos from Baffin Island in the early 1860's. Among the southern Eskimos, on the other hand, roughly those living south of the Arctic Circle, the winter phase became less important. In the sub-Arctic culture of southern