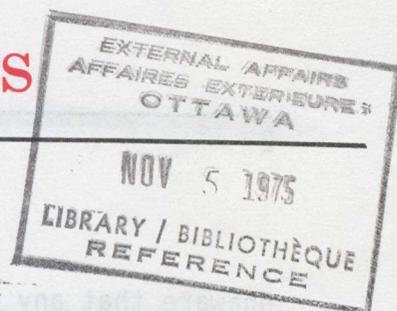




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## THE ESKIMOS OF CANADA

(Prepared by the Social Development Division, Territorial and Social Development Branch, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Ottawa.)

The many changes that have occurred in the Canadian North during recent years have affected almost every aspect of the lives of the Inuit (as some Eskimos now prefer to be called). There are only about 100,000 Inuit in the world, about 20,000 of whom live in Canada. The others are to be found in the United States, Denmark and the U.S.S.R. The Canadian Inuit inhabit a strip of territory that extends nearly half-way along the Arctic coast, and they occupy some inland regions as well. Throughout this entire area they are notable for the uniformity of their physical type, their language and their culture.

Early records and archaeological finds indicate that the Inuit of Canada once ranged further south than they do today, especially on the Atlantic seaboard. Early in the seventeenth century they were reported along the north shore of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and they occupied the whole coast of Labrador. In the Hudson Bay region they do not seem to have appeared further south than Cape Jones on the east and Churchill on the west.

The original Inuit were chiefly a coastal people, who fished and hunted seals, walrus, polar bears and whales. The Caribou, or Inland, Inuit inhabited the barrens and lived on caribou meat and fish caught in the numerous lakes. The inland population made their fires with shrubs instead of the animal fat used by the coastal groups. They rarely visited the sea -- in fact, some of them lived their whole lives without seeing salt water.

For over 4,000 years the Inuit or their predecessors, through four culture sequences, have inhabited Canada's Arctic regions. Several Icelandic sagas describe encounters with people who are thought to have been Eskimos, and the early European explorers of the Arctic occasionally came across people of the same type. The Europeans introduced the natives to the idea of trade and familiarized them with many new goods. This influence, however, was transitory; the real development of Canada's Arctic began much later than that of other Arctic lands. While their relatives in other countries were already trading with the whites, many Canadian Inuit remained completely

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