



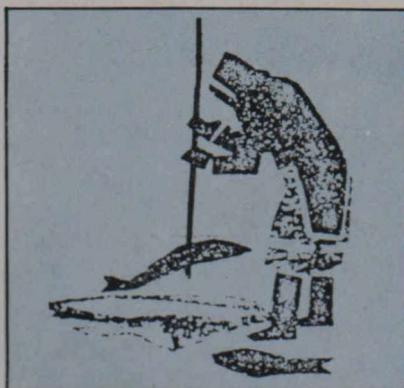
dark brown eyes, high cheekbones and wide faces. The skin is yellowish-brown, but surprisingly light, lighter than one would expect from their faces, which are usually sunburnt. The babies often have a well defined blue patch at the base of the spine which disappears after a year or two. The Eskimos have shorter arms and legs than the North American Indians, and are, therefore, smaller in stature, but they are not a short race by anthropological standards. They are muscular and well-covered and this, together with their bulky and loose clothes and rather short legs, makes them appear stout.

The Eskimos had evolved a remarkable and distinctive culture that enabled them to survive under more extreme conditions than any other race. The typical was the arctic form 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 floe-edge, or on the ice when the seals lay enjoying the sun in the long days of late spring. The sea mammals provided the Eskimos with meat for food, oil for heat and light, and skins for tents, kayaks, and many other purposes. Nothing made in civilization is as warm, as light, or as comfortable for the Arctic winter as the Eskimo skin clothing.

The question most frequently asked about the Eskimos is: Where did they come from? Their physique indicates they come from Asia and in fact their is really nowhere

else from where they could have come. The question which follows is: Where did they learn to become Eskimos? In other words, where did they learn to hunt sea mammals and to build up this remarkable culture that enabled them to spread right across North America to Greenland? There have been two main schools of thought. One, they were a people who moved from inland North America down the rivers to the Arctic coast or Hudson Bay and there learnt to become Eskimos; in other words, that the Eskimo was a Canadian invention. Others believed that it was around Bering Strait, and probably on the Asian side, that the Eskimo culture evolved. There has been a long controversy, but the evidence seems very much in favour of a Bering Strait origin.

Over the decades the life of the Eskimos has undergone a very great change. From hunters depending on the north for everything, they became largely trappers, who had to trap foxes to obtain the southern goods they had come to rely upon. This change did not, however, have much effect on their customs and social life. It is only since World War II that the impact of civilization has begun to be felt. Many changes have taken place in the north in recent years. Defence activities, such as radar stations and airfields, have been followed by mineral exploration. Schools, nursing stations, and wooden houses have been built. The Eskimos have been encouraged to move from their small hunting camps into larger settlements. Adjustment takes time, but the Eskimos are a resilient, very resilient, people. In learning to survive in the Arctic environment they proved their capability to live against odds that must have been much more formidable than many of the pressures that face them today. A new and different Eskimo culture is evolving and the world would be the richer for it.



At an exhibition of "Masterpieces of Fifty Centuries" at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York in 1971, three Eskimo carvings, a centuries-old art, were on display next to ancient Egyptian and Greek statuettes. Engraving has really come into its own and people are becoming more and more aware of other Eskimo crafts, too. An exhibition of "Crafts From Arctic Canada" in Toronto last summer showed how the ingenuity of the Eskimo has led to the making of clothing, hangings, jewellery and artifacts in traditional and contemporary styles, in addition to carvings and engravings.

The Eskimos have also learned to use new materials. Batik has appeared in the North and marvellous designs are being produced. Similarly, crochet cotton, weaving yarn, dye and copperplate have been adopted. For the Eskimos, everything but everything is raw material to produce decorative objects, so exquisite that they make one forget the present machine age. But beneath the bright colours, the ingenuity and the imagination — and the women are more gifted in this respect than the men, — hide the harsh realities of hunger and disease, which for so long were the lot of the Eskimo. Life, as one old Eskimo woman said, was once so hard that "I often used to wish I were a fish. Then my life would have been full of excitement and delight."

Eskimo crafts, especially the wall hangings, are but an expression of this dream.