

THE DATA BOOK

A Guide to the Eskimo Cards

Man: A Course of Study

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THE DATA BOOK

A Guide to the Eskimo Cards

What is Data?

Data is what this little book is full of: groups of facts and statistics. It is the one place where you can find lots of answers — and no questions asked!

What is The Data Book?

THE DATA BOOK describes many Eskimo things. Each one is important to the Netsilik Eskimos. By the time you have finished the course, they will be important to you, too. This book has pictures of the Eskimo Cards you have in the classroom, with a description to go along with each one. The Eskimo Cards are arranged in alphabetical order, and so are the descriptions. Though the cards will soon be out of order, the book will not, so you will have no trouble finding what you want.

What is The Data Book for?

The Eskimo Cards and the pictures in this book are realistic: they are drawn to look as much like the real thing as possible. You can learn the Eskimo words for objects, if you want. You can find out how an object is made, what it is made of, and how the Netsilik Eskimos use it. One thing about the book that makes it especially useful is that much of the information would be difficult — or maybe even impossible — for you to find anywhere else. Even an encyclopedia might not tell you that a hungry Eskimo dog will eat its leather harness with enthusiasm, or that an Eskimo cooking pot can be made by cementing slabs of stone together with a glue made of blood, salmon liver and ash.



AMULETS

arnauk (ARN awk)

To the Netsilik, amulets are objects with special powers. They can bring about good things and give men skill and luck in hunting. And amulets also protect the people from dangerous spirits or **tonraks**, from sickness, from the dangers of the sea, or from other perilous things.

Amulets are usually sewn to the clothing of their owners. Men, women and children all wear amulets. Women do not wear them for themselves, however, but for the protection of their sons. To the Eskimos, men are the ones whose lives are more difficult, who are in greater danger.

Amulets grow in power as they get older. As a person wears an amulet, its power gradually becomes attached to him. If he loses an amulet he has worn a long time, its power stays with him.

The Netsilik Eskimos have many different kinds of amulets. These are examples:

Teeth of a caribou, to make a man a good hunter

A fly, to give protection, because a fly is difficult to hit

A foot of a great diving bird, to make a man a skillful kayak paddler

A black swan's beak, so that a girl's first child may be a boy

Hair of an old man, for long life.



katerziun (ka TER zhun)

Antler straighteners are irregularly shaped pieces of caribou antler. Sometimes they are flat; sometimes they have a branch or two of the antler still attached so the tool can be held securely. Through the piece of antler are drilled holes of varying sizes, perhaps two, three or even four.

Caribou antlers are curved. If an Eskimo needs a straight piece, he must straighten a section large enough for his use. A piece of antler to be straightened is soaked in hot water until it is softened and flexible. Then one end is fitted into one of the holes of the antler straightener so it is held securely and cannot twist around. With one end secure, the Eskimo can bend the piece of antler to straighten its curve.

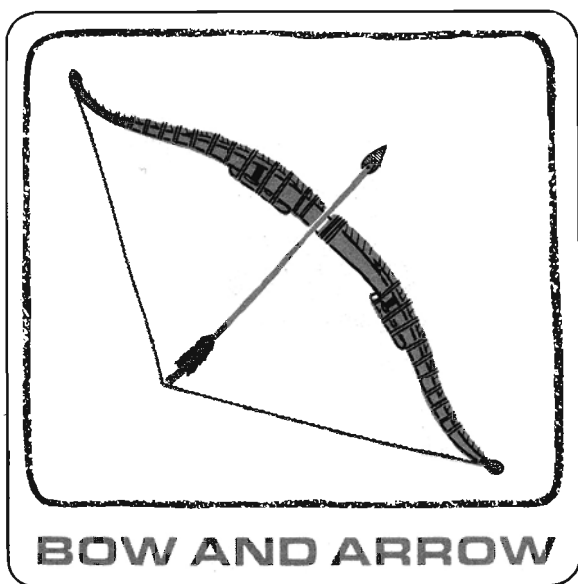


kamik (KA mik)

The Netsilik Eskimos have two sets of footwear: one for the warm, wet summer and another for the winter when the temperature drops to forty or fifty degrees below zero.

Summer boots are made of waterproof sealskin. This is important for summer travel, because the tundra is always wet then. The hair is removed from the skins to be used for boots. The hairless skins are cut carefully and are sewn together with fine sinew stitches that go only halfway through the thick skin, so there are no holes for water to leak in. The sole of the boot is made of especially thick hide with the hair left on—the Eskimos say to increase the wear of the soles. The boots have drawstrings of thong at the top so they can be pulled tight and fastened to the leg.

Winter boots are like summer boots, but they are made of furry, warm caribou skin. Caribou skin is not waterproof, but at this season it is the warmth of the fur that counts. They, too, are sewn with sinew and fastened with thong. Both kinds of boots come up nearly to the knee, and both are worn with a stocking of caribou skin inside the boot.



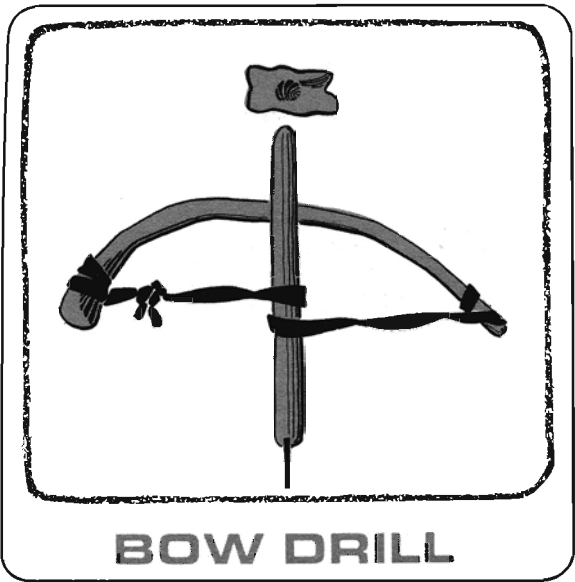
bow: pitikshe (pi TIK she)

arrow: karsyak (KAR siak)

A bow is made of three carefully shaped pieces of caribou antler joined together with sinew and splints of bone. A backing, or spine, of braided sinew is lashed the length of the bow. This strengthens the joints and makes the bow springier. The bowstring is a heavy cord of braided sinew. A hunter must take care to keep his bow dry, because sinew stretches when it is wet, and if the bowstring stretched, the bow would not have as much power. A bow is about three feet long, sometimes a little longer.

Arrows are made up of three separate parts: the arrowhead of metal (in olden times it was flint), a foreshaft of bone or antler into which the arrowhead is fastened, and a long shaft of wood or bone. Two or three feathers are set into the rear of the shaft. The shaft is notched at the end to fit the bowstring.

All together, an arrow is about 18 inches long. Arrows, too, must be protected and kept dry. For this a hunter has a sealskin quiver.



bow: pitiksherak (pi TIK sherak)

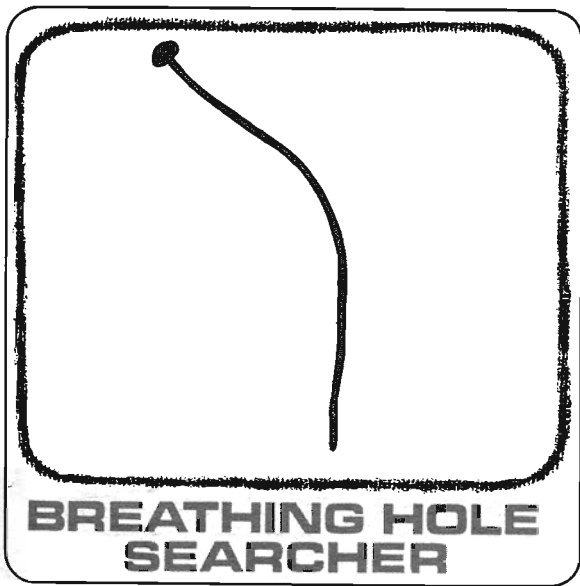
drill: nikit (NIK it)

mouthpiece: kingmiak (KING miak)

A bow drill is the tool an Eskimo uses to make holes in bone, antler or wood. It has three parts: bow, drill and mouthpiece.

The **bow** is a caribou rib (or a curved piece of wood) strung loosely with thong. The **drill** shaft is made of antler or wood, or sometimes both together, lashed and spliced with sinew. A point of iron is inserted into the shaft. The drill is usually eight to ten inches long. The **mouthpiece** is sometimes carved of horn or antler. More often it is a caribou ankle bone, which has a natural indentation that steadies the turning drill.

A bow drill can be used to start a fire when a different drill is used. The fire-making drill has a point of hard wood which rotates in a hollow in a piece of soft driftwood. When the driftwood begins to glow, a piece of dry moss or grass is put on the live coal. The coal is fanned, and a flame appears.

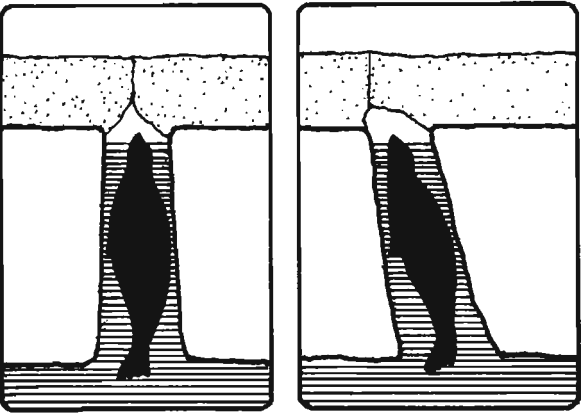


sasfutaushak (sas FUT awshak)

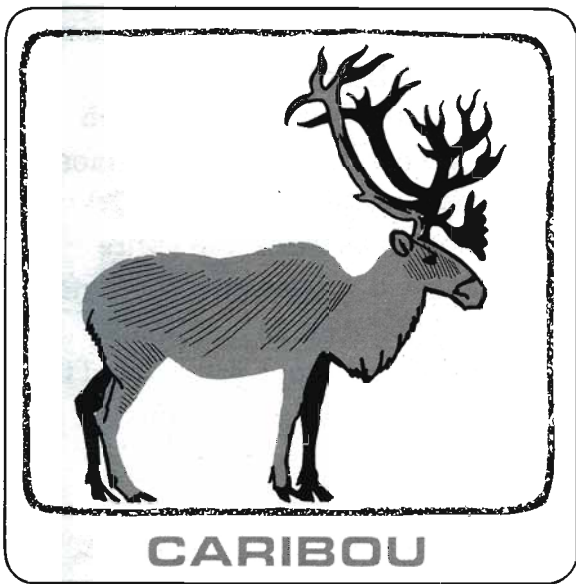
An Eskimo hunter must know the exact shape of a seal's breathing hole if he is to spear the animal successfully when it comes up for air. To explore the inside of the hole without damaging it and making the seal suspicious, he uses a breathing-hole searcher. This is a thin, curved rod of antler or wood about 30 inches long. If a long enough piece is not available, two pieces are carefully fastened together to make the proper length. It has a knob handle at the top, made of antler or wood, and sometimes it has a small tip of horn.

When the hunter finds a breathing hole, he carefully brushes the snow away without disturbing the hole. Then he puts the searcher into the hole and turns it around and around. It is part of learning to be a good hunter to be able to make an accurate mental picture of the hole from feeling around with the searcher.

The shape of the breathing hole may vary. If a hunter does not know



exactly where the seal will be, he may miss it the first time. And this means he has lost the animal, because in seal hunting there is never a second chance.



tuktu (TOOK too)

The Netsilik Eskimos hunt caribou in the fall at inland hunting places. They sometimes hunt the animals with bow and arrow out on the tundra. But more often they spear them from kayaks at places on the caribou migration routes where the animals must cross a stretch of water. This method gets a large number of caribou. The Eskimos depend upon it for food and for the skins they need to take them through the long, cold winter.

A caribou is a large, deer-like animal that inhabits the remote reaches of the Arctic. Once the caribou numbered in the millions, living in the far north in the summer and migrating south to the treeline in the winter. Today the herds still migrate, but they are small and few in number in comparison with the herds of the past.

To live in the extreme conditions of the Arctic, the caribou has a special

digestive system that allows it to make use of lichen as food. It also has a dense, heavy coat of hollow-haired fur, which allows both the caribou and the Eskimos to survive the bitter winters.

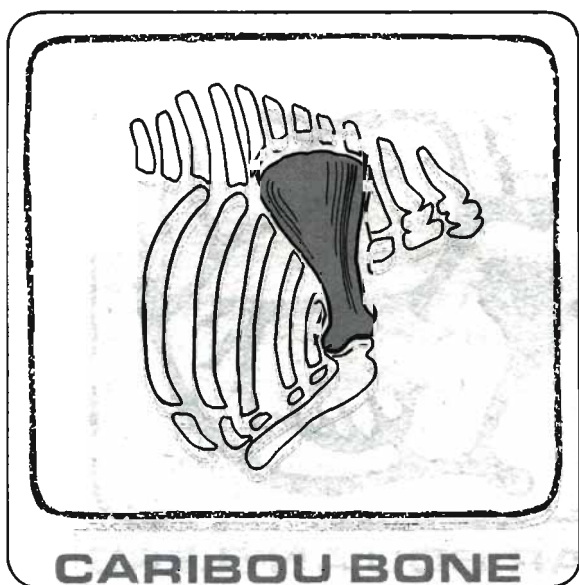
The Eskimos make use of the entire caribou. The warm fur becomes clothing and sleeping skins. Antlers and bone are used to make tools and games. And for part of the year caribou meat is the main food of the Eskimos.



nekyuk (NEK yuk)

Both male and female caribou have antlers. No other female deer is so fortunate. Antlers of females are not the great, spreading racks shown in pictures of males; they are much smaller, with fewer branches and points. Not all males have the huge antlers either. Most males have only medium-sized antlers. The huge, spreading racks belong only to young caribou between four and eight years of age. These are the years when a male caribou is most likely to mate. Biologists have found that antlers stimulate the urge to mate rather than protect the animal.

The Eskimos use caribou antler for many things. It is tough and strong and very durable. Bows are made of carefully shaped pieces of antler, and parts of many other tools are carved from antler sections. There are plenty of antlers to use because they are shed and regrown each year.

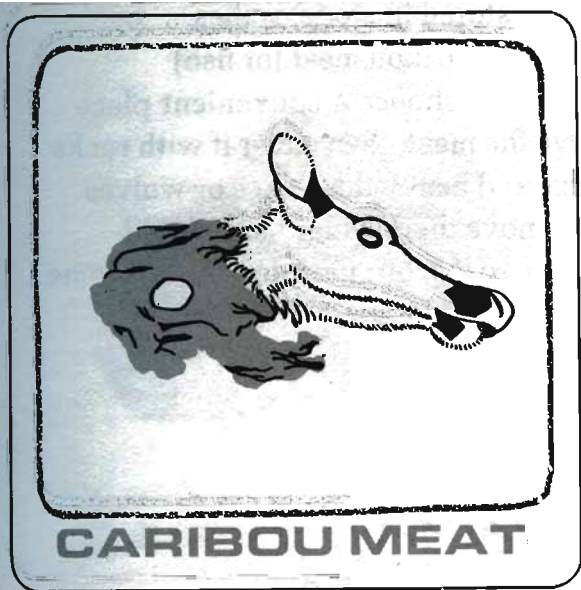


saunik (SAW nik)

Some caribou bones are used as tools, as for example the skin scraper, which is a scapula (shoulder-blade bone). It is not shaped at all by the Eskimos, because its natural shape is right for its use.

Other tools are made from bone. An antler straightener may be a bit of bone roughly shaped and pierced with one or more holes. A manik, a lure used to catch fish or gulls, is simply a piece of bone sharpened to a point at each end and embedded in a piece of meat. The handle of a man's knife or a woman's ulu is often of caribou bone, and so is the drill part of a bow drill, the foreshaft of an arrow, and many other tool parts.

Eskimo games, too, make use of bone. Parts of games like the ring and pin games are carved of bone, and a popular Eskimo gambling game uses many small foot bones of the caribou.



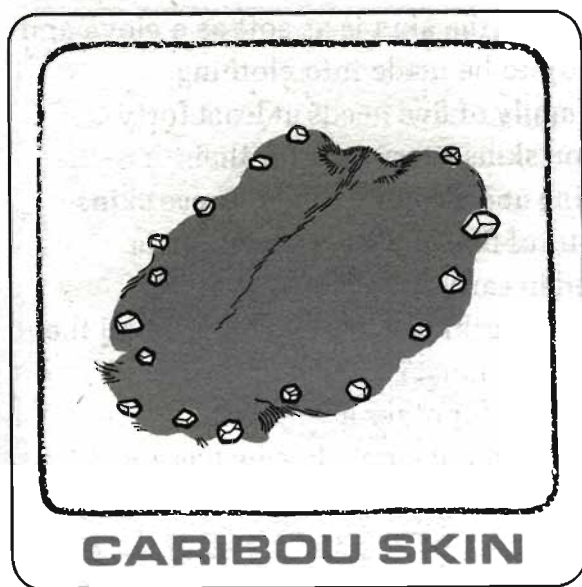
neri (NEE ree)

The Netsilik Eskimos have three main foods: seal meat, caribou meat and fish. They also eat birds and small animals like Arctic hares, but these are extras for them.

They eat all the meat of the caribou, including entrails, blood, bone marrow, and even eyes, which they consider especially good. A full-grown male caribou weighs 300 pounds or more and a female weighs up to 200 pounds. In the fall when the animals are fat from a summer of grazing, each kill gives a family many good meals. The meat they do not eat right away is cached for later use. If fishing or seal hunting is bad, the family then has a store of meat to fall back on. Or a family traveling may depend on a cache from another season so they do not have to carry all their supplies with them. The route they follow would depend on where they

had food stored in stone caches.

To cache caribou meat (or fish) the Eskimos choose a convenient place to leave the meat, then cover it with rocks so large and heavy that foxes or wolves cannot move them. Polar bears could move the rocks, but they don't often come inland from the sea ice.



okugshet (o KUG shet)

Without caribou skin, the Netsilik Eskimos would have a hard time living through the bitter Arctic winters. The skin has hollow-haired, thick fur that makes warm clothing and sleeping robes. The skin is used in many other ways, too. Parts of tents are often made of caribou skin, and so are skin bags. The skin may be scraped clean of hair and used for drum heads or cut into strips for thong.

Caribou skins are spread on the ground to dry, held flat by a ring of pebbles. The dry skin is stiff, and is softened by stretching and working with a blunt scraper. This is a man's job, because it requires great strength. After the first softening, the skin is dampened and rolled up for a day or two. Then it is scraped again with a sharp scraper, and at the same time it is pulled and stretched to the desired size. When all this has

been done, the skin is as soft as a glove and is ready to be made into clothing.

A family of five needs at least forty caribou skins every year for their clothing and sleeping robes. These skins must be of fine quality, from animals hunted in early fall when they have grown their thick winter coats. Beyond the forty, there must be skins for bags and thongs and for other needs, so a hunter must not stop when he has a bare minimum.



COOKING POT

ukusik (oo KOO sik)

The Netsilik Eskimos make rectangular cooking pots by hollowing out blocks of soapstone. Soapstone is soft enough to be worked with a knife. Near Pelly Bay they can get good blocks of stone for both cooking pots and stone lamps. In areas where the stone is poor, pots are made of slabs of stone glued together with blood, salmon liver and ash. In the winter the men from Pelly Bay go south to the Arrowsmith River to chip out great blocks of soapstone and bring them back to the camp.

Cooking pots have holes drilled at each corner so they can be suspended over the fire by thongs. The pots are between ten inches and two feet long, depending on the stone available, but larger ones are preferred. It is the man's job to make cooking pots and stone lamps, but once they are complete, the utensils belong to the women of the family.



kemek (KE mek)

The dog is the only domesticated animal the Eskimos have. Without their dogs, they might not have managed to survive in the Arctic. Dogs are hard workers for the Eskimos, not pets. They carry packs in summer and fall, and pull sleds and help in hunting in winter. They search out seals' breathing holes under the snow with their sensitive noses, and if a polar bear is spotted, they surround it and hold it at bay until a hunter can kill the animal.

It is difficult to be sure of the origin of Eskimo dogs, or "huskies" as they are often called, but they are probably a mixture of a breed of Asiatic dogs with some wolf added. Often they appear to be more wolf than anything else — wild and vicious and almost unmanageable. But they are well suited to a life of hard work, because they are strong, durable animals. They have

dense coats of hair that allow them to sleep out of doors when the temperature is 70° **below** zero. In a blizzard they simply curl up and cover their noses with their bushy tails to filter the snow and let the drift pile up over them. They grow strong and healthy on a diet of meat scraps and bones, but they need a large amount of food to work hard. On a long trip an Eskimo must take more food for his dogs than for himself. Thus only the very best hunters in a camp can support more than two dogs. On a long trip with a heavy load two or three hunters may combine their dogs to pull the sled.

Grown dogs are treated harshly, but puppies are fed well and protected and petted, especially by children. They do this not to make pets of the puppies, but to help them grow into strong, healthy adult work-dogs. The Eskimos give their dogs amulets to increase their abilities — perhaps the tendon of the front leg of a caribou, which would give the dog good health and strength. All dogs have names, usually more than one, and they are named either after dead dogs or living people. When a dog is named for a person, it is in the hope that the person will live longer than the dog. The dogs' names, too, have special powers to protect them against sickness.



ano (AH no)

Dogs are hitched to a sled by means of a simple harness made of furry caribou skin, sealskin, or thickly braided sinew. The harness is made of two loops fastened together in front. One loop goes over each foreleg and shoulder of the dog. A band goes across the back of the neck over the shoulders. Where the harness ends, near the dog's tail, a strong piece of thong called a trace is attached.

At the other end of the trace there is a buckle to attach the trace to the line that pulls the sled. Sometimes the lead dog's harness is trimmed with strips of light-colored caribou fur, but the other dogs' harnesses are not trimmed at all.

Harnesses are always taken off as soon as a trip is over, because if the dogs are hungry, and they usually are, they will eat the leather with enthusiasm.

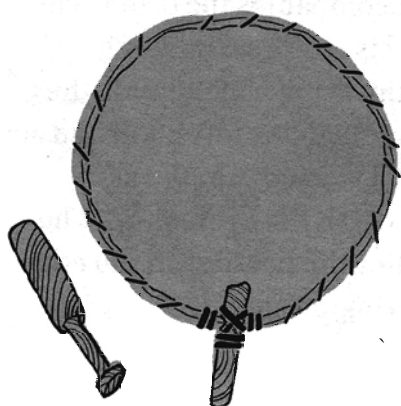
Winter is the time when dogs wear harnesses often, and also the time when they are kept hungry on purpose. This is to make their noses especially acute in smelling out seal breathing holes.



nanjnaut (NANJ nawt)

In the summer, when the ground is bare and the tundra is wet and soft, the Eskimos cannot use sleds to carry their belongings as they travel from place to place. So they use their dogs without sleds. They train the dogs to carry packs on their backs. Some dogs don't take easily to this kind of work, and the patient trainer must start over again and again after the animal somehow manages to shed its load. But other dogs are more easily trained.

The pack itself is usually nothing more than the family's tentskins folded carefully into two equal halves so that the dog's load doesn't slide off its back. Into the tentskins are folded cooking pots and tools, so a dog may end up carrying a pack that weighs 50 pounds or more.



DRUM

drum: kilautik (kee LAW tik)

drumstick: ratur (RA turn)

The Eskimos have only one musical instrument — the drum. They use it only in the winter in the evenings when all people in camp gather in the large, ceremonial igloo to sing songs and eat together.

A drum is made of hairless caribou skin, a ring-shaped frame of wood nearly a yard in diameter with a handle, and a length of braided sinew. The skin is cut in a circle just large enough to fit across the ring and over the edge so it can be fastened. The ring is made with a groove in the outside edge. When the sinew is tied tightly around the outside of the ring over the skin, it cannot slip out of this groove. Between song fests, when the drum is not used, the skin is taken off the ring and put out in the snow to freeze. Then when it is needed again, it is thawed and stretched over the frame while still wet.

A club-shaped wooden drumstick about a foot long accompanies the drum. The striking end is wrapped in thong.

To play the drum a man holds the wooden handle in his left hand and strikes the edge of the drum, not the skin center part, with the drumstick. The skin amplifies the beating on the edge into a low, ringing sound.



inican (i NEE can)

The most important job of an Eskimo woman in the winter is to care for her family's clothing. Damp boots could easily mean frozen feet to a hunter, so great care is taken to dry them. When someone comes into an igloo, he takes off his parka and beats out the snow so it will not melt and dampen the garment. Boots and mittens, which become caked with snow and cannot be beaten dry, are put on the drying rack over the fire in the stone lamp.

Drying racks are made in many shapes. Some are rectangular, with an irregular net of thong tied to the wooden (or antler) frame. Others have a triangular platform of small twigs, each tied to the frame individually. No matter what form a drying rack takes, it is always supported by three sticks. One stick stands upright on the snow platform that holds the lamp, and the other two are pushed into the snow walls of the igloo.



ekaluk (EK aluk)

In the late summer the Netsilik Eskimos fish for Arctic char as the fish migrate upstream to their spawning places. The men build dams of stone to trap the fish, and spear them from the water. The supply of fish caught at the summer fishing places is important for the winter ahead. If seal hunting is not good, a hunter and his family can always fall back on their summer fish, carefully stored in a cache near the river under stones too heavy for animals to pull away.

The Arctic char is a kind of salmon, but it does not die after it spawns like some salmon do. It swims back to the sea, and then returns the next year to spawn in the same place. On its swim back to the sea the Eskimos again fish for char. This is when they are camped near a river in the fall and fish through the thin, new river ice.

Occasionally in the winter the Eskimos travel to inland lakes and chop through the thick ice to fish for lake trout.

Lake trout are in the same family as Arctic char, but they prefer the fresh water of lakes to the sea.

Fish are most important as food.

They can be dried and carried on long trips, and they are excellent food for the dogs. But there is little else that can be done with a fish. The Eskimos, who make use of every resource they have, use the skin of large fish for bags for storing small tools, and they use whole fish in making runners for their sleds. Otherwise they have found no use for fish except for food.



ekalujak (eka LOO jak)

When the Netsilik Eskimos fish through the ice of a river or lake, they use fishlike lure as bait to get the real fish to the surface where they can be speared. The lure is a small figure carved of bone or of walrus ivory obtained in trade. Some lures are carved to look like a fish, and others are simply oval in shape. Both kinds fool the fish. Attached to the tiny piece of ivory are small chips of ivory or seal teeth — or even a little strip of fish skin. These pieces flap and catch the attention of the fish when the fisherman pulls on the line.

The lure and its stone sinker are attached to a fish line made of sinew cord. The Eskimo “fishing pole” is a rough stick no more than a foot and a half long. Usually the stick has a bone point at one end, which is used both for chipping the ice and for killing the fish.



ikpearjuk (ik pe AR yuk)

The skin of a fish, carefully removed from the fish so it has no holes, makes a handy tool kit for an Eskimo man. The tool kit is about as long as the fish was, usually somewhere around a foot long. Often a drawstring of sinew fastens around the top of the bag, and sometimes there is a handle on the side. The tool kit contains all the tools listed below, some of which are described on the other pages of this book.

Adze: A blade of iron is lashed with thong to an antler handle. The blade is set at an angle so the tool can be used with a scraping or chipping motion. An adze is used to thin down pieces of wood or antler.

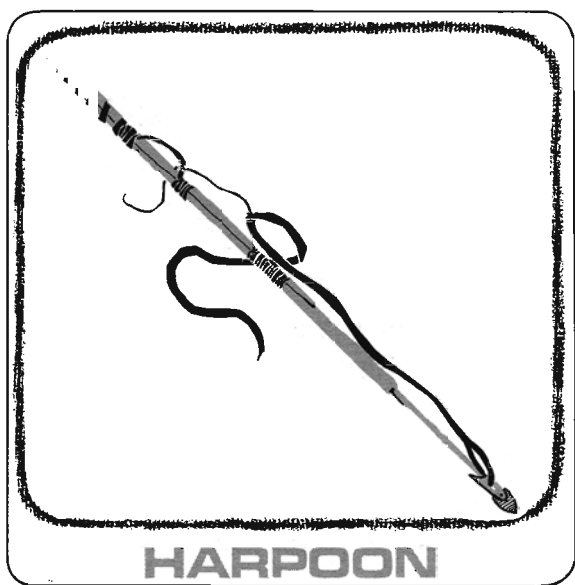
Bow drill: see page 8.

Man's knife: see page 47.

Saw: The Eskimos have not always had saws. With little wood to cut, they didn't need them. They copied the idea from early explorers, and then added some ideas of their own like the small carved animal head that sometimes decorates the handle. The saw blade is only six or seven inches long and is riveted into a handle of antler or wood.

Small splitting knives: There are two or three small knives in the kit with blades of different shapes. One has a sharp edge at an angle to the blade. This is used to make or to enlarge holes in bone, antler or wood. Since it is often used with the bow drill, some knives of this sort have a hollow in the handle so they can be used as a mouthpiece for the drill. Another small knife is shaped like and is used as a chisel. The sharpened part at the end of the blade goes straight across. A third kind of knife, called a burrin, has a beak-shaped blade. It is used to cut grooves in a piece of antler so that it can be split.

Whittling knife: This knife has a long handle and a small blade so the man using it can guide it accurately. It is used for very careful, fine work.



unak (OO nak)

shaft: igimak (i GEE mak)

head: sangmiak (SANG miak)

line: tukarsiak (too KAR siak)

The Netsilik Eskimos use a harpoon for killing seal through breathing holes in the sea ice. Their harpoon is a complicated tool made of three separate parts: a **shaft** for thrusting the harpoon head into the seal, the detachable harpoon **head** with barbs to make it stay in the seal's body, and a **line** attached to the harpoon head so the hunter can pull in a harpooned seal.

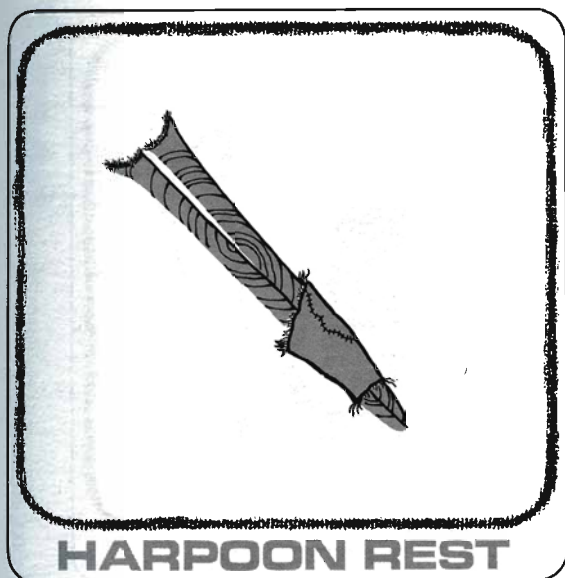
The harpoon **shaft** itself is made of two parts. There is a foreshaft of antler or metal, about two feet long. This is set into the main shaft of antler or wood or a combination of the two, which is about twice as long as the foreshaft. The main shaft has hand grips so the hunter can hold it securely. Sometimes the

end of the main shaft is fitted with a hard piece of bone so it can be used for breaking ice. Altogether the shaft is nearly six feet long.

Long ago the harpoon **head** was made of bear bone, because it was nearly as hard as stone but not brittle.

When the Eskimos began to use metal, it replaced parts once made of bear bone. The head has a simple, arrowlike shape with barbs to hold it in the animal. It also has a hole so the line can be attached securely. The head is carefully fitted to the foreshaft so that it does not fall off, but it comes off easily when a hunter hits a seal. Just in case he loses the seal with harpoon head and line still attached, a hunter often carries an extra in his hunting bag.

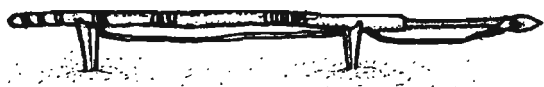
The **line** that is attached to the harpoon head is made of braided sinew. Thong would be almost as strong, but it freezes hard when it gets wet. Sinew doesn't soak through as easily and freeze, but a strong line of sinew is much harder to prepare than a line of thong, because it takes time to braid a heavy sinew line twelve feet long. Thus in spring, when the weather is warmer, the hunters use lines of thong.



HARPOON REST

nangmaktok (nang MAK tok)

While he waits for a seal at a breathing hole, a hunter must keep his harpoon close at hand. But his hands will be warmer if he does not have to hold it. He manages to have warm hands and a ready harpoon by using harpoon rests. A harpoon rest is a piece of wood or two pieces tied together. A groove in the top is covered with caribou fur so the harpoon does not make a noise that could reach the sharp ears of a seal. The bottom of the harpoon rest is pointed so it can be placed securely in the snow. Each hunter has two harpoon rests, which he puts into the snow to his right as he prepares to hunt. He lays the harpoon across the two harpoon rests with the head toward the hole and settles down to wait for a seal.





HUNTER'S BAG

tuteriak (too TER iak)

When a hunter goes out to hunt seals at their breathing holes, he carries his equipment on his back in a fur bag. The bag may be caribou skin, sealskin, fox, or the skin of a furry, unborn seal, depending on what the hunter is featuring that winter. It is usually no more than a foot wide and a foot and a half long. It has a thong at the top to go over the hunter's shoulder.

When the hunter finds a hole and readies himself for the hunt, he takes from the bag the following pieces of equipment:

- harpoon head and line

- seal indicator and an extra puff of swansdown

- harpoon rests

- scoop

- a short line for dragging the seal back home

After everything is ready, the hunter puts the bag on the snow beside the hole and stands on it. It deadens any sound his feet make in the creaking snow and helps to keep his feet warm.



igloo (EE gloo)

Without igloos as their winter homes, the Netsilik Eskimos could not have survived the harsh winters in their Arctic land. They have no wood to use for houses, and out on the sea ice where they camp in the winter, they are far from rocks and stones that they might use for building.

The only resources they have for building homes are ice and snow. There is plenty of ice around them, but ice is difficult to work with and not a good insulator. Snow, on the other hand, is easy to cut with a caribou antler knife, and because it is porous (full of small air spaces) it insulates the family against the cold.

To build an igloo, a man needs a snowknife, an area of even, wind-packed snow and about an hour to spend. First, he tests the snow to be sure that it is consistently packed, and then

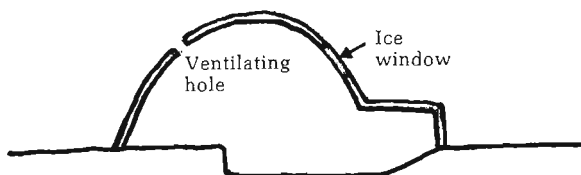
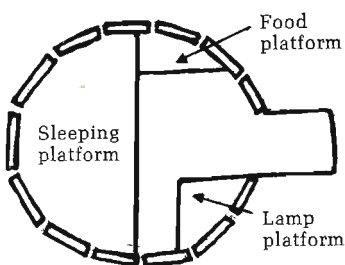
he draws a circle about ten feet in diameter on the surface to form the outline of the igloo. Then he begins cutting snow blocks **inside** the circle. The blocks are nearly three feet long, a foot and a half wide and six or eight inches deep. They are cut so that as the blocks are being removed, the floor of the igloo is being excavated about a foot and a half to two feet.

As the man cuts the blocks, he puts them in place along the marked circle and shapes them to start the spiral that will end in a single round block at the top of the dome of the igloo. He trims each block as he puts it in place so that it will fit tightly and not let in any breeze. While he is finishing the igloo, his wife fills the cracks between the blocks with snow and shovels a layer of snow over the igloo for extra warmth. When the main igloo is complete, the man builds another tiny igloo or a tunnel of snow blocks to protect the entrance. A single large snow block is the door. In front of the door, carefully placed against the prevailing winds, is a wind break to protect the entrance.

When the igloo is finished, it is four or five feet high from the outside, but higher on the inside where the floor is below the surface of the snow outdoors. Only half of the circle is cut away. The other half is simply leveled and smoothed to form the sleeping platform, the family's bed. By one corner of the bed is a lower platform for the stone lamp. On the other side is another low platform for storing meat.

If the igloo is going to be lived in for several weeks, the builder adds a window of ice over the entrance. And always there is a small hole cut in the side of the dome to act as a ventilator. By opening and closing the ventilator, the “nose of the house,” as the Eskimos call it, and adjusting the snow block at the door, the temperature inside the igloo can be controlled.

Controlling the temperature carefully is important. Heat in the igloo comes from two sources: the flame in the stone lamp, and the bodies of the people living in the small space. The purpose of the igloo is to provide shelter and warmth, but a house built of snow can be a problem when it gets too hot. If the inside snow melts and then turns to ice, part of the insulating quality of the snow is lost. And of course if it gets **too** warm, the igloo can melt right through. The temperature in the igloo is usually between 30° and 50°, a comfortable temperature for people dressed in furs.





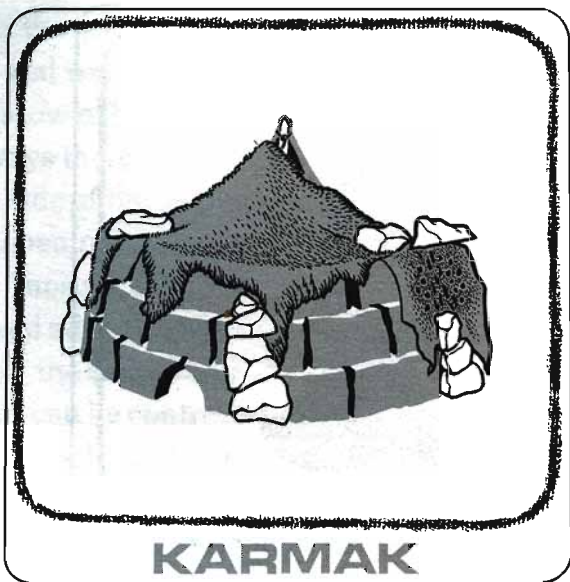
INUKSHUK

inukshuk (i NOOK shook)

The Eskimo word “inukshuk” means “image of man.” Inukshuks are large rocks or piles of stones shaped to look like humans but smaller. The largest inukshuks are no more than three and a half feet high, about two-thirds the height of an Eskimo hunter.

The Eskimos build long rows of inukshuks near places where they know caribou herds cross open water. The inukshuks are placed in such a way that from a distance the caribou, with their poor eyesight, mistake them for a group of men, turn away, and thus are driven into the water at a spot where hunters in kayaks can kill them.

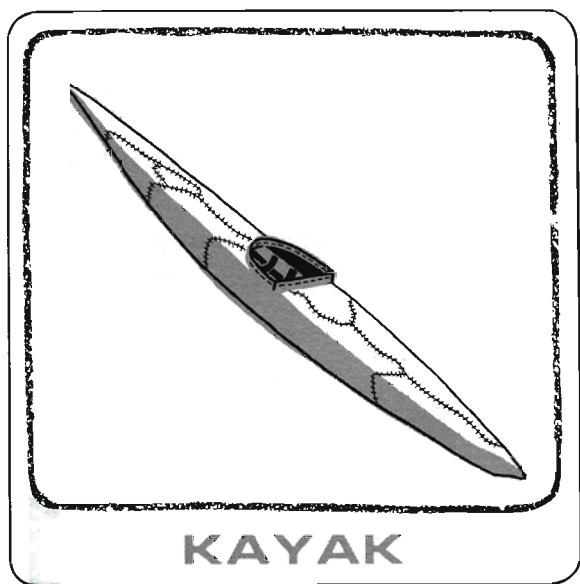
To help in hunting is the purpose of most inukshuks. But occasionally an inukshuk is constructed near a good camping spot, or perhaps just on a whim when a rock suggests an inukshuk to a traveler.



karmak (KAR mak)

In the early fall, when the snow has not drifted deep enough and has not yet been packed by the wind, it cannot be cut out in the large, firm blocks needed to shape an igloo. At this time of the year the Eskimos build a temporary home that is half igloo, half tent.

To build a karmak, the Eskimos cut blocks of ice or snow and put them together to form a round structure with straight walls. In the fall the people are usually camping near a river to fish so ice is easy to get. Snow is a better insulator, so if they can find enough snow for small blocks they use it. In either case they use the skins that made up the summer tent for the roof.



KAYAK

kayak (KI ak)

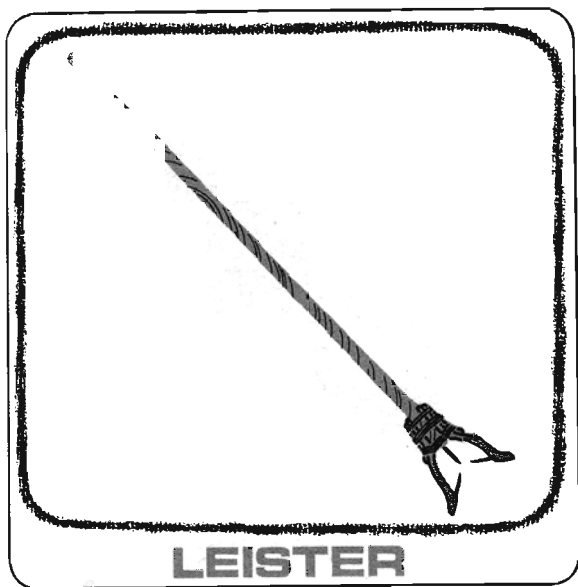
The Netsilik Eskimos use kayaks only on inland lakes and rivers, not in salt water as do some other Eskimo groups.

It is the only kind of boat they use.

A kayak is twenty feet or more long and only a foot and a half wide at its widest point. It is so light that one man can carry it for miles across the tundra from one lake to another.

The frame of the kayak is made of driftwood, and the ribs are of small willow branches. The covering is tautly stretched sealskin. The skin is prepared with special care to make it as light as possible but still quite waterproof. The cockpit in which the paddler sits is only a little larger than the man himself. Its edge is raised above the deck of the kayak so no water can get inside. The paddler sits on a piece of thick, furry bearskin — a much more comfortable seat than the hard ribs of the kayak.

Just in front of the cockpit, across the deck of the kayak, are two or three thongs stretched tight. The shafts of the spears the hunter will use to kill caribou slide under the taut thongs and are held fast. The tips of the spears slide into loops of antler sewn to the skin cover near the bow.



LEISTER

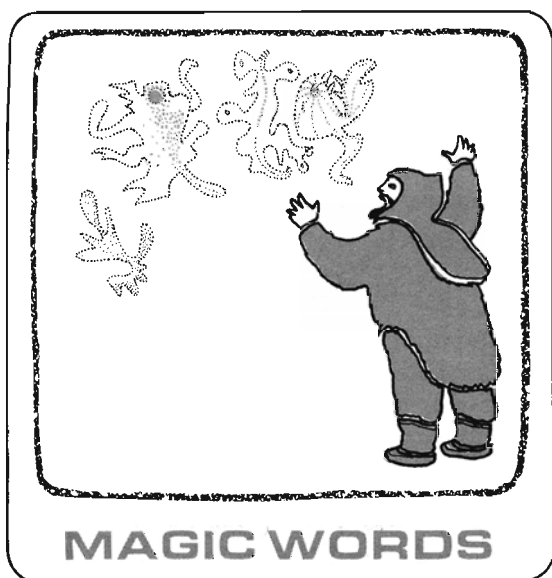
kakivak (ka KEE vak)

When fish are plentiful — when they are migrating, for instance — the Eskimos do not need any bait to lure them.

They spear them in the rivers with a long-handled fish spear.

This spear, or leister (LEE ster), has three prongs at its head. The center one is a short, sharp spike with barbs of bone or iron and the longer outside prongs are made of flexible musk ox horn with barbs pointed in toward the center prong. When a fish is speared on the center prong, the two flexible side prongs hold it tight so it cannot get away.

The center prong is set into the long wooden shaft, and the side prongs fit in grooves in the side of the shaft and are lashed to the shaft with sinew cord. The shaft itself is six to eight feet long. If a piece of wood that long is not available, two pieces are lashed together to make the proper length.



erinalot (eri NAL ot)

Magic words are known only to the person they belong to and must not be spoken where others can hear or they will lose their magic power. They are passed down from father to son, but they also can be bought from an angatok for a high price. Some magic words are sung to a tune, and others are just spoken in a whisper, repeated again and again.

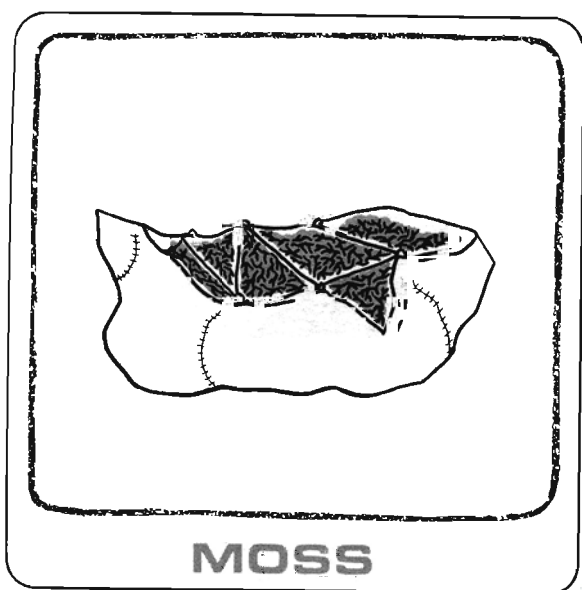
Magic words are used to call spirits for help in hunting, to cure an illness, or to quiet stormy weather. Often the words themselves are ancient words no longer used. Others are vague, meaningless phrases or fragments of words, but they are all the more mysterious because they don't make any sense. It is not important whether the words can be understood by humans as long as the spirits know what they mean.



pilaut (PEE lowt)

An Eskimo man never goes anywhere without his knife. He wears it attached to his parka; a sealskin cover protects the sharp blade. It is his basic tool, and he uses it for everything from cutting food to skinning an animal. Men's knives have a narrow metal blade fastened to a handle of antler or wood four or five inches long. The blade is usually single-edged, but sometimes it is sharpened on both edges. It is either set into the handle or riveted to a metal mounting which is inserted into the handle. The knife is about eight inches long.

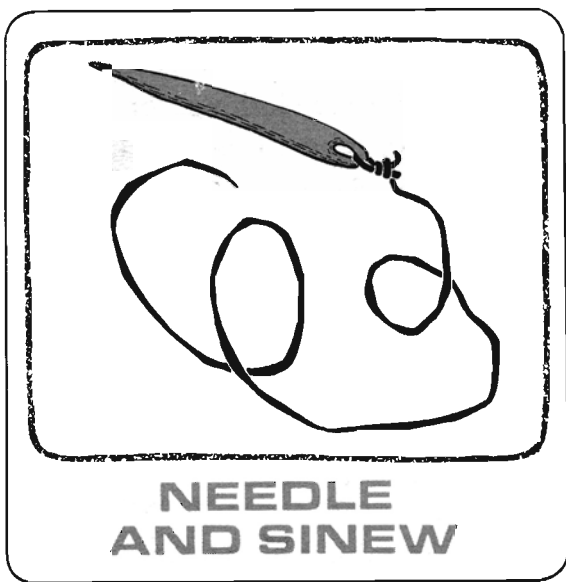
This knife is used for skinning and butchering an animal, cutting food, slicing thong, cutting skins — in fact, for any cutting job. Sometimes a knife with a much longer blade is used for butchering, and there are special knives for whittling and for splitting antler. But the pilaut is the general, all-purpose knife.



MOSS

tingowshat (tin GOW shet)

For cooking and for heat and light in the igloo the Eskimos burn seal oil in a stone lamp, using a small ridge of chopped moss as a wick. They gather moss in summer, dry it, chop it and store it in small skin bags. A special wick-trimming tool, a curved piece of stone, is used to control the small flame so just the right amount of wick is burning and the seal oil is not being wasted. Another special tool, a moss spade, is used when moss must be dug or loosened from the frozen soil in the winter.



needle: mitgut (MIT gut)

sinew: ivalo (ee VA lo)

Tiny bones from the wings of birds are sharpened at one end and pierced at the other to make sewing needles. Women carry their needles in bone needle cases. A thimble of thick seal or caribou skin, which hangs from a carved bone thimble holder, usually attached to the front of her parka, completes a woman's kit of sewing implements.

For sewing thread, the Netsilik Eskimos use caribou sinew. The sheets of sinew just under the prime meat along a caribou's spine are cut out, carefully scraped clean of flesh, washed, and spread flat to dry in the sun. Sometimes the fibers are separated when the sinew is wet; if so, they are round when they are dry. More often the sheets of sinew are dried first and the fibers separated later; this sinew will be flat.

Strands of sinew are braided together to make cord of various thicknesses. This is used for drawstrings in clothing, for fishing or harpoon lines, for bow strings, and in many other ways.

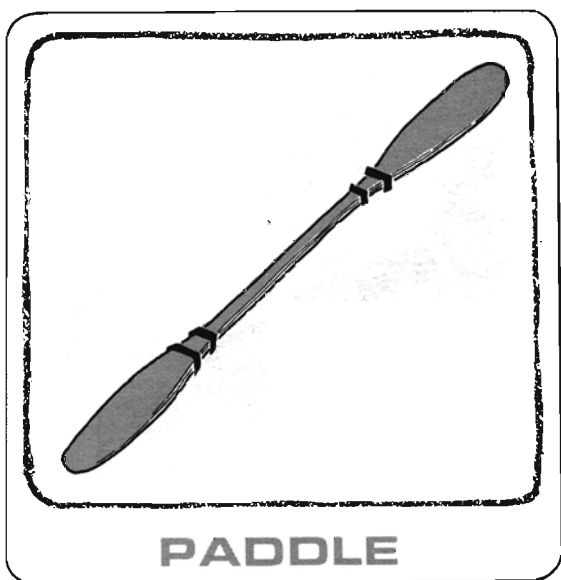


NULIAJUK

Nuliajuk (nooli AH juk)

Nuliajuk is the most powerful spirit of the Netsilik Eskimos. She is the mother of all the animals and the mistress of the sea and the land. She rules her people through spirits. Through them she controls the weather and the location of the animals, so she allows hunters to get food or leaves them to starve.

When she is angry, she takes the animals away. Then only an angatok, a man who has many spirits to help him, can persuade her to change her mind. She is hard on mankind because as an orphan child she was pushed off a raft and allowed to drown. Since then she has been happy to punish those who were so cruel to her, and she demands that the Netsilik observe many difficult taboos.



pautit (PAW tit)

Kayak paddles are carved of driftwood, double-bladed, with drip rings of skin between the blades and the handle.

Sometimes the handle has carved hollows for the paddler's hands. Paddles are seven to nine feet long; the thin blades are about four inches wide and the handle is not as wide but thicker. Since wood is so scarce in the far north, it is rare to find a single piece long enough for the whole paddle. Usually two or three shorter pieces are joined together — lashed with thong — to make the right length.



caribou parka: kulikak (koo LEE kak)

sealskin parka: netsergun (net SER gun)

Although the resources of the Netsilik Eskimos are few, in some cases they are so good and appropriate that they could not be improved upon. This is true of the furs the Eskimos use to make clothing.

For winter, men, women and children dress in caribou-skin clothing: parkas, pants, boots and mittens for adults and older children, and all-in-one suits for small children. Caribou skin is not waterproof, but it is very warm because its dense, hollow hair, traps an insulating layer of air. Out of doors in the coldest weather the people wear two layers of clothing, one with the fur turned inside toward the body and one with the fur on the outside. In summer, light, waterproof sealskin parkas often replace the heavy caribou parkas.

A winter parka is warm because of the fur used, and it is also warm because of the way it is made. A parka does not open

down the front but slips on over the head. It fits loosely except around the neck and shoulders where it is carefully shaped to fit its owner's body. A tie at the neck pulls the hood tight and closes the neck opening at the same time. This careful fit keeps the air that has been warmed by the body from escaping through the top of the parka. If a person gets too warm, he has only to loosen the tie at the neck for heat to escape.

A Netsilik man's parka is made of three skins, one for the back, one for the front and one for the arms and hood. After the skins are cut to the right shape, the pieces are sewn together with sinew. They fit together edge-to-edge but do not overlap, so the seams are not thick and stiff. Parkas are slit on the sides into a short front flap and a longer flap in back, to make sitting on snow and ice more comfortable. Women's parkas are similar, but they have sleeves that are puffy at the shoulders to allow room for a baby inside the parka, a longer flap in back, and a longer hood.

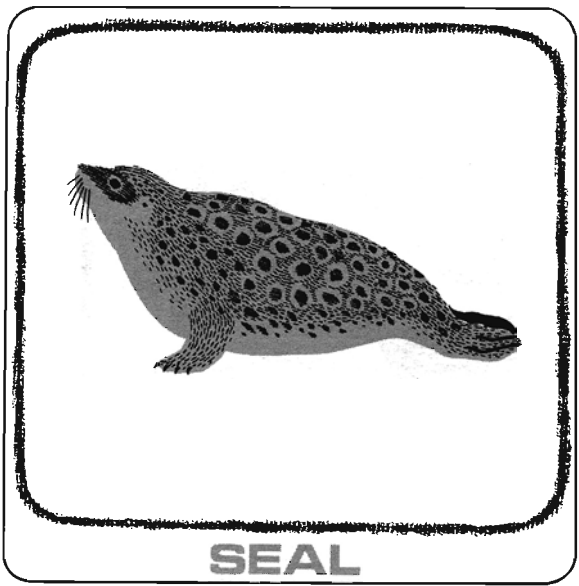
Parkas are simple, utilitarian garments. Caribou skin parkas, however, are often beautifully patterned and decorated with contrasting light and dark skins and a fringe of skin at the bottom edge.



ilaut (EE lawt)

The most important use for an Eskimo's scoop is to get pieces of ice or bits of slush out of the hole in the ice before fishing begins. But it is a simple, durable tool that can also be used for drinking, serving soup, or anytime a scoop would be useful.

Bowl and handle together, a scoop is no more than a foot long. For special jobs where a longer handle is needed, a longer piece of wood or antler is lashed to the handle to lengthen it. The bowl of the scoop is narrow — only three inches wide at the most — and is usually made of musk oxen horn. Sometimes the entire scoop is shaped of horn, but usually the handle is made of caribou antler or wood. At the end of the handle there is a piece of thong so the scoop can be hung from a hook stuck in the wall of the igloo.



netsirk (NET sirk)

The seal the Netsilik Eskimos hunt in winter is the ringed seal, or **phoca foetida**, its Latin name.

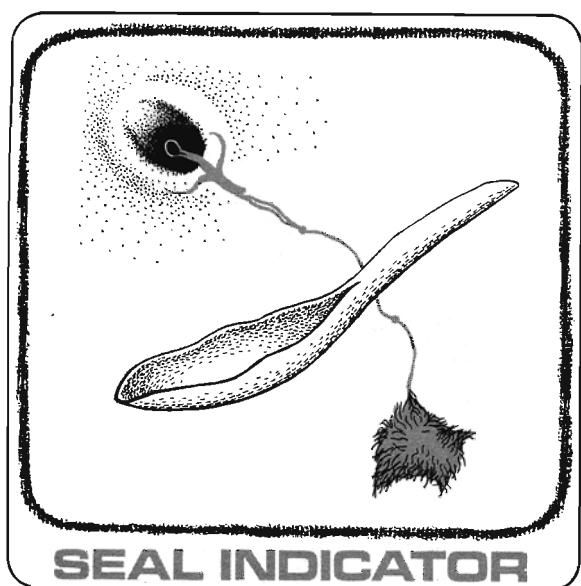
The ringed seal lives in the Arctic Ocean and in the bays of the Central Canadian Arctic. It is a compact animal, averaging about five feet in length and 200 pounds in weight. It has lovely, glistening greyish fur marked with darker circles. Sealskin is important to the Eskimos; they use it whenever they need a tough, waterproof skin. Boots, tentskins and kayak covers are only a few of the many things made from sealskin.

Even more important than the skin is seal meat. In the winter it is the staple food of the Netsilik Eskimos. Men hunt for seals at their breathing holes, the only way they can get to the seals in winter when the sea is frozen over. Seals are mammals and must breathe just as any land animal must breathe, though not as often.

Seals can stay underwater for as long as fifteen minutes. As the sea freezes in the fall, the seals must keep open air holes for their winter use. They use their teeth and needle-sharp claws to break away each new layer of ice as it freezes and keep their place to breathe. Each seal has several breathing holes, but in an emergency it uses another seal's hole to breathe. By late winter, when the sea ice has reached its greatest depth, a seal's breathing hole is a tunnel through the ice longer than the seal itself.

In addition to the skin and meat, the fat, or blubber, that a seal stores under its skin is important to the Eskimos. They pound the blubber to free the oil which is the fuel for their stone lamps. Seal oil is the only fuel the Eskimos have in winter. It cooks their food, gives them light, and helps to keep them warm.

In winter the Netsilik Eskimos depend so much on the Ringed Seal that they would not be able to live where they do if the seal were not there too.



SEAL INDICATOR

kiviutak (kivi oo tak)

All through his wait at a seal's breathing hole, an Eskimo hunter must be prepared to harpoon a seal at any minute. So he will be ready at just the right instant, he uses a little signal to tell him that a seal is approaching. There are two kinds of seal indicators. One uses a small bone that bobs up when the seal puts its nose up to breathe. This bobber may frighten the seal, however, so the other kind of indicator is preferred.

The other seal indicator is a tiny loop of white swansdown held directly over the dark hole by a carefully split piece of caribou sinew. The split section of the sinew is held over the hole by two sinew "arms." Sometimes the arms are separate pieces of sinew tied to the main piece; sometimes the whole indicator is just one piece of sinew split into the right shape. As the seal comes up in the hole the water level rises slightly, making the almost

weightless piece of down move just a bit. A hunter must have sharp eyes to see the movement, but without the indicator he might not be quite prepared and thus would lose the seal.



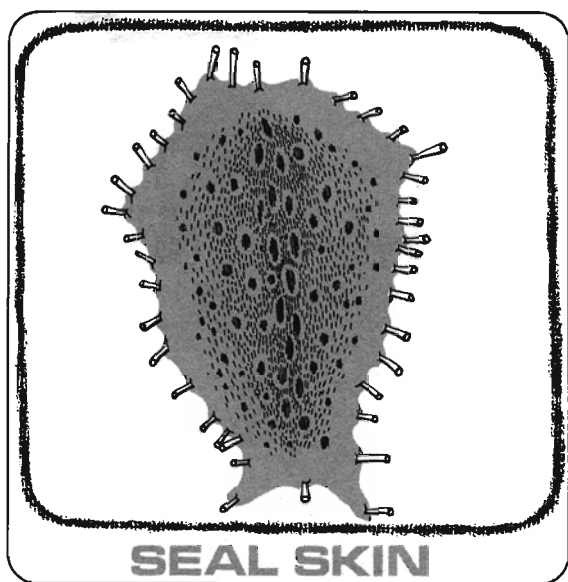
neri (NEE ree)

In the winter, the caribou have migrated south and the lakes and rivers are frozen so deep that fishing is difficult. Then the Netsilik Eskimos rely on seal meat for food.

An average seal weighs about 200 pounds, though once in a while an especially large old male weighs 250 pounds. Of this 200 pounds, about half is good lean meat. One-third of the weight is in the seal's internal organs and the rest is blubber and bone.

Meat:	100 pounds
Internal organs:	60 pounds
Blubber:	20 pounds
Bone:	20 pounds

The Eskimos eat all the meat and most of the internal organs, so each average-sized seal gives the hunting group about 150 pounds of food. And almost as important is the blubber which provides oil for the lamp and a tasty treat for the Eskimos. The bones and any scraps go to the dogs.



kesik (KEE sik)

Sealskin is waterproof, but not warm. Caribou skin is warm but not waterproof. Both skins are important to the Eskimos, each for special purposes.

Sealskin is stretched to dry, and then must be softened with a skin scraper just as caribou skin must be softened. Sealskin is often used without the hair. There are two ways of removing the hair: either shaving it off with a very sharp ulu or dampening the skin until the hair begins to rot and fall off.

Because it is light, sealskin is used for summer parkas. It is also used to make summer boots for walking over the wet tundra. It makes strong, durable thong, dry summer tents, and it is the only skin suitable for covering a kayak frame. To preserve its waterproof quality, sealskins are sewn with a special stitch that goes only halfway through the skin. Kayaks are sewn together this way, and so are summer boots.



**netsiup niakrozinga (NET siup
nia KROZ inga)**

The Eskimos believe that the souls of men and of animals live in the head. They also feel that souls live forever, inhabiting first one body, then another. Thus the soul of a seal whose body was well treated by a hunter and his family may allow itself to be caught again by that hunter.

When people leave one camp on the sea ice for another, they often put out the skulls of all the seals killed in the old camp. The noses of the skulls are pointed in the direction of the new camp. Thus the seals can follow the hunters to the new hunting ground and hunting will be good there.

Rasmussen tells of coming on seal skulls on the ice in **A Journey to the Arctic**, the entry for May 5.



SKIN BUCKET

katak (KAY tak)

Buckets are made from sealskin because it is waterproof. The hair is removed from the skin, and the pieces are cut to make an oval bottom, high sides and a wide, strong handle. Then the pieces are sewn together with fine stitches so the water does not leak out. A bucket is usually six or seven inches in diameter and eight to ten inches high.

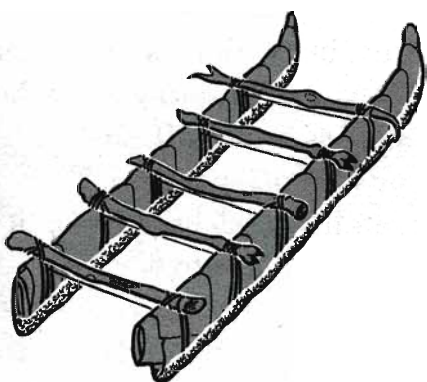
When an Eskimo family travels in summer, the wife often carries the skin bucket filled with small possessions. In the winter, the bucket is hung on a piece of antler stuck into the wall of the igloo.



ertorsit (air TOR sit)

The simplest skin scraper used by the Netsilik Eskimos is a caribou scapula, or shoulder-blade bone. Other scrapers are made by splitting a hollow bone and setting the shaped piece of bone into a wooden handle. The size of the scapula scraper depends on the size of the caribou the bone came from — perhaps six to eight inches long for a full-grown caribou. The scraper with a handle is about the same length or perhaps somewhat longer.

The Eskimos need a scraper to prepare either seal or caribou skins. The skins must be softened and scraped, first with a dull scraper and later with a sharper-bladed tool. A bone scraper may be used to remove the hair from caribou skin, but a sharp, metal-bladed ulu must be used to shave the coarse, tough hair from sealskin.



SLED

kamutik (ka MOO tik)

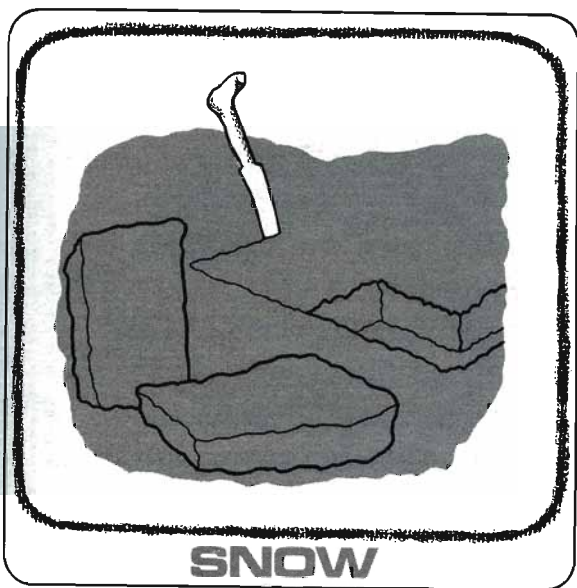
As soon as snow is on the ground in the fall, transportation becomes easier for the Netsilik Eskimos. They have sleds, pulled by their strong dogs, to carry their belongings.

In the Netsiliks' land, a sled made of wood is a rare treasure. For carrying meat or equipment a short distance, temporary sleds are made of blocks of ice or furry skins. But for a trip in winter a sled is vital.

With no resources of wood to rely on the Netsilik Eskimos use other materials in new and original ways. The sled that the Netsilik are best known for is made of skins, fish, thong and caribou bones. The size of the sled depends on the size of the skins. The very largest sleds are about six feet long.

To make the sled slide easily over the ice, a shoeing of chopped moss and water is put on the underside of the runner and

water is sprayed over that to make a thin glaze of ice. The glaze of ice must be replaced often, but with luck the frozen mass lasts all winter. In spring when the sun is warm, the moss is too soft, so a different kind of shoeing is used. The Eskimos carefully cut slabs of ice to fit the runners and "glue" them to the sled with sticky snow. When the weather gets too warm for ice runners, the sledding season is over.



anijuvak (ani JOO vak)

The Arctic is a cold desert. It snows less in one year in most parts of the Arctic than it does in many cities in the United States. Two and a half feet of snow is all that falls in the long winter in the far north, and much of this comes in the spring.

Snow begins to fall in September — indeed, there may be snow flurries any month of the year. The heaviest snows come in May, and by June spring has come.

The winter months are stormy, even though little snow falls. The wind blows almost constantly, blowing the loose snow about in great blizzards. It blows high surfaces bare and packs the snow into drifts many feet deep.

Snow is a resource to the Eskimos, not a problem. The wind and cold and dark make their lives hard, but the snow helps them to survive. From snow they make igloos, their winter homes, because well-packed snow is firm enough to be used

for building. In each block of snow is trapped enough air to make the snow good insulation against the cold. Inside the igloo, snow forms the “furniture” of the Eskimo family: a sleeping platform, a cooking table, and a low platform for storing food. From snow is carved the pot used to capture the blood of a seal being butchered. Snow men are used as as targets for archery practice, and outdoor snow platforms are used to store skin-covered equipment out of the reach of dogs and other hungry animals. Just as important is the difference snow makes in traveling. Summer travel on the wet, spongy tundra is difficult, and the people must carry their belongings on their backs. But as soon as there is snow on the ground sleds can be used. With a sled, a heavy load can be carried more easily for great distances.

Snow is so important to the Eskimos that they have several words in their language to describe it accurately. For example, **anijuvak** means “snow lying on the ground,” and **kanertok** means “snow falling.”



igsgat (IGS gat)

In the spring, when the sun on the snow makes a bright glare that is painful and harmful to the eyes, the Eskimos (especially hunters) wear sun goggles to cut the glare and to guard against snow-blindness.

There are several styles, but the most common is the one shown in the picture: a piece of wood carefully shaped to fit over the bridge of the nose and close to the brow, with narrow slits for looking out. The goggles are tied on with a headband of braided sinew, or narrow thong.

Similar but not quite the same is a style with an oval of wood for each eye, each with a slit for seeing. The two eyepieces are fastened together with sinew or thong, and the headband is the same.

Snow goggles vary in size, because each man makes his own to fit his face.



pana (PAH na)

In the winter a Netsilik Eskimo man would be helpless without his snow knife.

It is the one tool he needs to cut out blocks of snow to build an igloo, and without an igloo he could not live long in the bitter cold.

Before the Eskimos began to use iron, snow knives were carved of slightly curved pieces of split caribou antler about a foot and a half long. If a long enough piece was not available, two pieces were fastened together with bone pegs or lashed with fine sinew. The blade of the knife was about $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide and sharpened on only one edge. The handle was carved to fit the owner's hand so he could get a good grip. Sometimes the carving on the handle included simple decorations, too. Often the handle had a hole for a loop of thong, because most men wore their snow knives hung from a special button sewn to the back of their parkas.

Newer snow knives have metal blades set into antler handles. The handle is longer and the blade shorter, but otherwise they are very much like the snow knives of antler. The knives with metal blades can be used for many jobs that the antler knives could not do. With their sharp blades they can cut meat or thong or almost anything that must be cut.



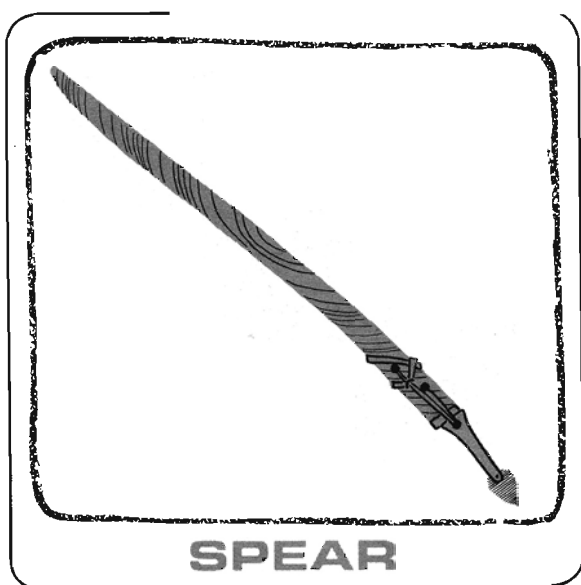
pualrit (poo AL rit)

The Netsilik Eskimos use a snow shovel to fill in the cracks between the blocks of snow in a newly built igloo and add an extra layer of insulating snow. It is a woman's job to fill the cracks, so a snow shovel is usually a woman's tool.

There are two kinds of snow shovels: one made of wood and one of skin. The wooden shovel, shown in the card, is made of flat pieces of driftwood fastened together with strong sinew. The handle is of wood or antler. The blade may be edged with bone so the wood does not chip and wear away.

The skin shovel has a frame of four pieces of split caribou antler or wood lashed together with braided sinew to make a triangle with a handle at one of the points. A piece of sealskin is spread loosely over the frame and tied on with sinew.

Both shovels are about the same size — about 30 inches long and half as wide at the widest part. They both have a special feature that makes them especially easy to use — a loop below the long handle to be used as a second hand-grip. This second handle makes it much easier to throw snow to the top of the igloo.



kapun (KAH poon)

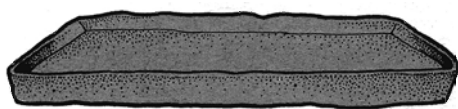
When he is hunting caribou by kayak, a Netsilik Eskimo carries a pair of spears fastened to the bow deck of his kayak so they are ready for use at any moment. The points of the spears are slipped through antler "handles" at the bow of the kayak and the shaft is held secure under two or three tightly stretched thongs just in front of the paddler.

Spear blades are of iron, set into a foreshaft of antler. The foreshaft is attached by sinew to a slender wooden shaft. The overall length of the spear is between five and six feet.



tonrak (TON rak)

The Netsilik believe that the air and the sea are full of spirits, most of which are harmful spirits. But there are good spirits, too, and these the Netsilik call upon, using magic words, to protect them against the dangerous spirits. Some spirits are more powerful than others. The most powerful of all is Nuliajuk, the mother of the animals and the mistress of the sea and the land. There are many spirits in the world, some of which do Nuliajuk's bidding, but none is as powerful as Nuliajuk herself.



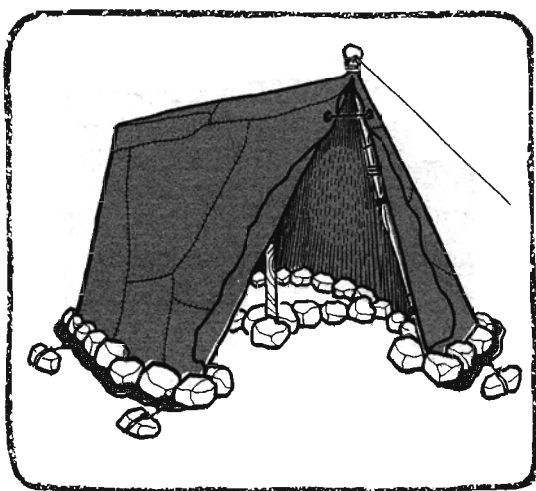
STONE LAMP

kudlik (KOOD lik)

To a Netsilik Eskimo woman, her soapstone lamp is her most valuable possession. She brings it with her when she marries, and if she decides to leave her husband, she takes it away with her. Wherever her lamp is, that is where she lives.

Soapstone lamps are shallow, hollowed slabs of stone eighteen to twenty inches long and about half as wide. They provide heat for cooking, and warmth and light for the igloo in winter. Because there is no other fuel than seal oil or caribou tallow, the fire in the soapstone lamp is the only fire in the camp.

It is the woman's job to keep the lamp burning. She trims the wick of moss so that the lamp burns evenly and makes economical use of the seal oil. The wick is spread along the whole length of the lamp, but the woman judges how much of it should be kept burning at any time.



TENT

tupek (TOO pek)

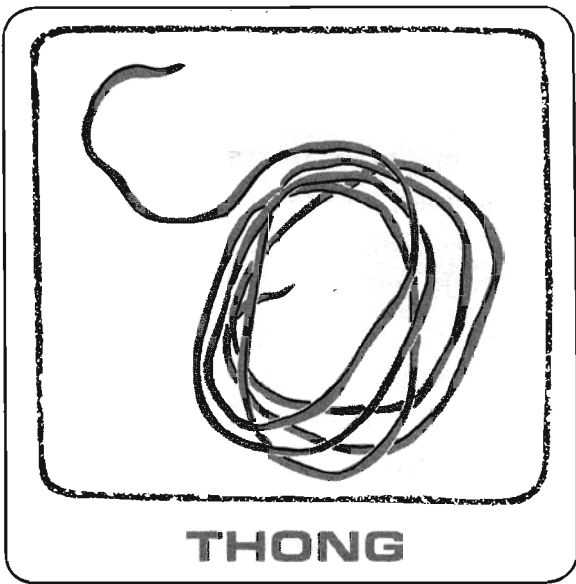
In the summer, when the weather is warm and there is no snow on the ground, the Netsilik Eskimos live in tents. As they travel from one hunting place to another, they carry their tentskins and poles with them. When winter comes, tents are not warm enough, so they move first into karmaks, and then, when the snow is drifted and wind-packed, into igloos.

The Netsilik Eskimos use two kinds of tents. The cone-shaped tent, which uses two poles bound together at the top to form an A-frame, is an older type because it uses little wood, a resource in very scarce supply in the Netsilik's land. The other style, shown in the card, is larger, but it requires an additional wooden pole with a crosspiece like a T; the same kind of A-frame as in the conical tent forms the front of the tent, and the T-frame is at the rear. Between the

A-frame and the T-frame the skins are not supported but are stretched so tightly that they cannot sag. In both types, the skins are stretched and held to the ground by a double ring of stones, one inside and the other outside, resting on the skins and against the inner row. Inside the tent, a line of small stones marks off the sleeping area. Both types use guylines, long pieces of thong attached to the skins, to spread the tent and hold it firm.

Tents are usually made of sealskin, but caribou hides may be used at the entrance. The skins at the front and on the sides of the tent usually have the fur on, but toward the rear, thin, translucent pieces of skin allow some light into the tent.

The tent poles are often made of several short pieces of wood joined together by a glue of dried blood. Prepared and applied properly, it makes a firm joint that needs no additional lashing.



caribou skin thong: athluna (ath LOO nah)
sealskin thong: agluna (ag LOO nah)

The Netsilik Eskimos have no plants with fibers that can be used to make rope, but they need something they can use as rope for such things as whips, strings for bow drills, and line to tie a dead caribou to the side of a kayak. There are two things they can use: sinew or skins. To make a heavy rope of sinew means braiding many, many strands of fine sinew together. This takes a long time, so sinew rope is not used often. But skins are easier to prepare. The Eskimos use both sealskin and caribou skin to make thong.

To make sealskin thong, an animal is skinned in a special way. Either the skin is peeled off whole, or cuts are made several inches apart all the way around the body, and the wide bands of skin are pulled off like taking off a sock. While it is still wet, each band of skin is cut in spiral fashion, starting at one edge and

continuing around and around to the other. This forms a long strip an inch or less wide. The strips are stretched between heavy rocks, and when they are dry the hair is shaved off. Then each strip is softened by working it with the teeth, by pulling and stretching, or by pulling it through one of the holes of an antler straightener.

Caribou-skin thong is usually made from old skins worn almost hairless and thus no longer warm. A skin is dampened and spread out flat on the ground. Again, it is cut in a large spiral, starting at the outside of the skin and working to the center. This thong does not have to go through a long softening process because the skin has already been prepared. It has only to be scraped clean of fur to be ready for use.



ulu (oo loo)

An ulu has a crescent-shaped blade of iron honed on stone to a sharp edge all along the curve of the blade. The handle of the knife is usually antler, and the forked stem set in the handle, to which the blade is riveted, is often of iron, but sometimes of antler or bone.

Without her knife, an Eskimo woman would not be able to do her daily work. It is her all-purpose tool that is never out of her hand for long. She holds the handle of the ulu with the stem between her third and fourth fingers. This way she deftly cuts, scrapes, slices and trims, preparing food, sinew and clothing for her family.

