

Teaching in the Arctic can be rigorous—though in some parts of the North it is hardly more so than in rural schools in the northern half of the provinces. But whatever its demands there is never any lack of applicants—although choosing the right ones must be done with discrimination. With so many teachers willing to accept the challenge of an Arctic posting, qualifications can afford to be the highest in Canada, and they are.

There are close to 50 schools in the Northwest Territories and among those opened in 1960 are two interesting new ventures for the North. A new school at Fort Simpson will include the first classroom for the study of agricultural science, and quarters in the old school building will accommodate hard-of-hearing and sight-saving classes. The 1959 vocational training program included many trade skills for students of all ages. One Eskimo girl took on-the-job-training as an air hostess from a northern airline and now flies between Montreal and Frobisher Bay. Another Eskimo air hostess who trained as a nurses' aide some years ago flies between Winnipeg and Churchill. Interesting too is the fact that the first oil-drilling crew working north of the Arctic Circle included three Eskimos who had been trained in Calgary as oil-workers.

Trainees who go "south" on courses are chosen with care and competition is keen for the privilege. The last group of Eskimos to go outside the Arctic in 1959 went to the Royal Canadian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers School at Barrie in southern Ontario to take a four-month course in power-plant operation, a skill in great demand in northern communities. Most of these trainees were school caretakers learning to handle school heating and lighting plants. Others were taking more advanced training.

Eskimos can suffer by having other Canadians expect too much of them, or expect it too quickly. But it is difficult to withhold admiration from a race with the innate resourcefulness to adapt as quickly as they do to callings so radically different from their traditional way of life. The first group to tackle hard-rock mining, for example, performed with profit to themselves and to the North Rankin Nickel Mining Company which employed them, and brought credit to their race.

Neither is it difficult to think highly of a race whose talent with a knife and a lump of stone has been acclaimed so widely, yet who, themselves, have always regarded the gift as something fortuitous—a hobby, a creative pleasure to be enjoyed in one's spare time. Not all Eskimo carving is distinguished; some of it is not even good. But enough of it is both to have had an extraordinary impact. Eskimo art has come out of its environment free of any influence save the day-to-day struggle for life of a people, and has stepped into the front rank of the world's primitive art, becoming, as it should, an important source of revenue for its creators. And for many Eskimos who, through illness or other causes, are not able to hunt or perform heavy labour, it has offered a new avenue of productiveness. At the Eskimo Rehabilitation Centre at Frobisher Bay, Eskimo carvers may offer their work for sale, receive guidance if they ask for it, and obtain a supply of stone since none is available locally. The Eskimo art shop at the Frobisher airport is a thriving business.

No one can put creativeness in a man if none is there, but if he has a spark of talent he can be helped to gain confidence and extend his range. This is what is going on at the Eskimo Craft Centre at Cape Dorset, Baffin Island. Working with a gifted instructor, Eskimos have already produced one art form—stone block and seal-skin pictures—that may eventually compete in popularity with the stone carvings. A seal-skin print was selected for presentation to Queen Elizabeth when she visited Canada in the summer of 1959. The artists use paints made from pigments mixed with seal oil and brushes of polar bear hair. Designs are cut out of the skin and transferred to paper by hand-colouring. One stencil can make as many as thirty prints.

For the past five years Northern Affairs exhibits—in addition to exhibitions of carvings—have introduced to the "south" everything from parkas and mukluks to walrus harpoons. Eskimos are not mass-producers and some time will elapse before enough Arctic handicrafts are available for wide sale. But the popularity of the Eskimo-produced goods that have been brought out of the North for sale in Canadian and American cities shows definitely that the market is there.