

HISTORY

When the hunt was over, the men recovered their weapons. Each harpoon bore a special mark, recognized by every hunter. Clever hunters might have killed five, seven belugas, while others had taken but one. To haul the whales back to camp, a sort of pipe was driven into their bodies or necks, and air was blown into the carcasses so they would float. A single man often had as many as five belugas in tow behind his kayak.

After a hunt the shore was covered with whale carcasses. For myself, I did not count them, but I know there were a great many. Once I heard the elders say that three hundred whales had been taken. At other times there were but one hundred and fifty of them. There are not many belugas any more. The Inuit scarcely see any during their expeditions—the Inuit eat white man's food nowadays. (Nuligak, 1966:14-15)

Armstrong reported that those who killed the whales were honoured by tattooing "... with one line extending outwards from the inner angle of the eye across the cheek; for each one taken, the captor became entitled to an additional mark." (1857:176).

USE AS A RECREATIONAL KAYAK

This kayak has some promise as a modern recreational kayak, bearing in mind that its extreme lack of beam and rounded bottom would make it very tippy. This, combined with its long waterline length and straight bottom, would probably also make it hard to turn unless one laid it over a bit first. On the positive side, the kayak's light weight and low-drag cross-section would make it easy to propel.

For the modern kayak builder, experience would be necessary to carry out a reconstruction of this type. The finished product, however, would be well worth the effort.

**At the great whale
hunts I remember there
was such a large
number of kayaks that
when the first had long
disappeared from view,
more and more were
just setting out.**

COURTESY PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES OF ALBERTA: ERNEST BROWN COLLECTION, B9955



ESKIMO FAMILY, MACKENZIE DELTA, 1903

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- A set of plans for the Mackenzie Delta Eskimo kayak NMM IV-D-2039 is available for \$15.00 US from David W. Zimmerly, 193 Holmwood Ave., Ottawa, Canada K1S 2P3. Other kayak plans are available— write for a list.

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