

In Remote Villages—

NAR Sending Textile Workers To Teach Qiviut Knitting

After the creation of the domestic musk ox, whose fleece, known as "qiviut," is one of the rarest wools in the world, the Institute of Northern Agricultural Research is sending textile workers into Alaskan and Canadian coastal villages to teach qiviut knitting techniques to the Eskimos.

In 1968 the initial village work was done by Mrs. Ann Schell, Textile Specialist for the University of Alaska Musk Ox Project, who went to Mekoryuk on Nunivak Island and taught Eskimo women there to knit fine, lacy scarves from qiviut.

The success was such that there has been great demand for their fancy work even before initial marketing.

Villages which have since been taught by Mrs. Schell and field worker Miss Helen Griffiths, are Goodnews Bay, in south-western Alaska, Shishmaref, on the Seward Peninsula, and Point Hope, Wainwright and Barrow, all on Alaska's north-west coast.

In Fort Chimo, Canada, where INAR runs a second musk ox station collaborating with the government of the Province of Quebec, Eskimo knitters are being taught by Miss Griffiths & Mrs. Joan Bellaar-Spruyt.

Enthusiastic interest is being shown by the women of all these villages in learning to knit with qiviut and to use patterns which graphically show how the completed lacy designs will look.

Designs are taken from Eskimo artifacts and each one is identified with a particular village.

Initially, the Musk Ox Project is paying the women for their work and handling marketing. Later it will hand over the business to village cooperatives which will also manage herds of domestic musk oxen.

The credit for establishing this novel Arctic industry, which will help alleviate some of the poverty among Eskimos and other Arctic peoples, goes to John J. Teal, Jr.,

President of INAR and an anthropologist who specializes in the Arctic.

He is also Professor of Animal Husbandry and Human Ecology at the University of Alaska. Last summer he set up a third musk ox station at Bardu in Northern Norway.