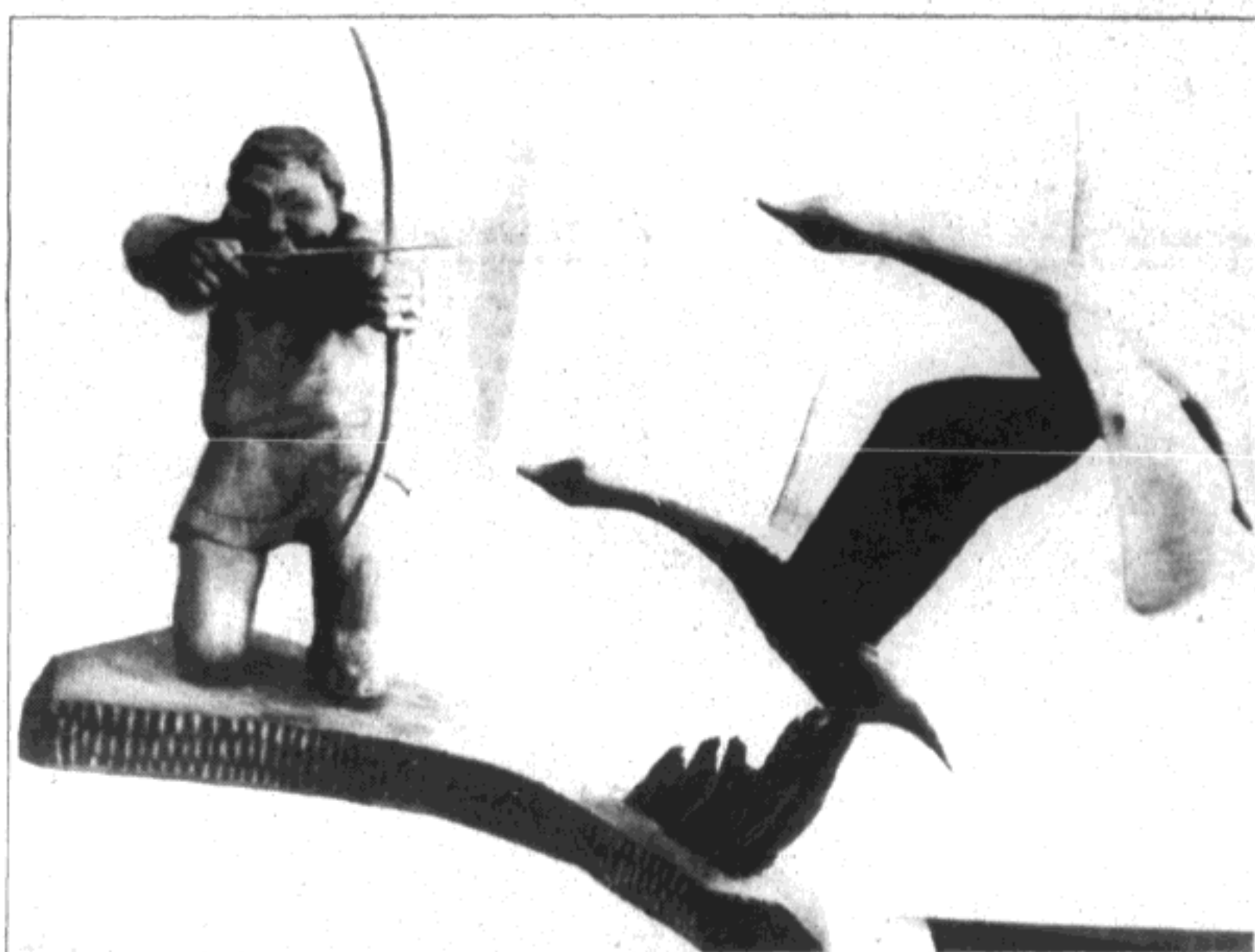




Beaded footwear is traditional with these Native students of the Norilsk Art School in Siberia. It is made in the school's applied art workshops.

Photo by A. Belonogov, Novosti Press



A Siberian Native hunter prepares to down a duck in this carving by a student of the Norilsk Art School for Northern Minorities.

Photo courtesy of Novosti Press

Arts training provided by Russians for Natives

by Boris Ivanov, Novosti Press Agency

MOSCOW — Visitors to the Soviet Arctic are surprised to see that traditional Native footwear called "unty" or "bokari" is as popular with persons of Ukrainian, Russian and Byelorussian descent as it is with the Natives themselves.

The footwear is made of lavishly beaded deerskin and it, along with traditional locally made parkas, is the clothing preferred by local amateur hunters on their expeditions to the tundra or taiga.

Manufacture of such goods is encouraged by the Soviet Union, part of the nation's efforts to promote traditional arts and crafts of the northern aboriginal races such as Eskimos,

Evenks, Nenets and Chukchis.

Specialized traditional arts and crafts schools have been set up in some cities, and similar courses are offered at non-specialized schools.

One of those specialized schools was organized 20 years ago in the city of Norilsk on the lower reaches of the Yenisei River north of the Arctic Circle.

[Editor's note: Norilsk is in the center of Siberia, and its latitude is about the same as that of Umiat.]

It offers training to Natives of the Taimyr Peninsula and most students are from families engaged in traditional local occupations such as reindeer breeding, trapping and fishing.

The school's three-year courses help young men and women continue their

ancestors' traditional handicraft and musical heritages.

Here can be heard the sound of the ancient instrument called the "bargan," and visitors can enjoy watching expert carvers craft from wood and bone traditional figurines such as polar foxes, polar bear and sledges pulled by deer.

They also can observe beadwork in progress, in patterns and colors reminiscent of the Northern Lights.

Several years ago, a folk music group was organized at the school. Its name, "Buskan," means "a bit of ice" in the local Dolgan Language.

The group has a vast and constantly expanding repertoire of traditional northern songs and dances. For instance, Marina Kosolapova, a Nenets Native, has taught fellow students the

Northern Gulls Dance, a traditional festive dance she learned from her grandmother.

The company's instruments are traditional, and Native poets compose lyrics especially for Buskan.

"Three years seems a short time for such a course," says teacher Vladimir Slizkov. "But most of our students are young men and women of outstanding ability, so they manage to learn a lot here."

When they return to their homes, graduates work as instructors in local clubs, as interior decorators, choreographers, or teach the fundamentals of folk arts and crafts in schools.

And, he says, some graduates have entered art colleges in Siberia, Moscow and Leningrad.



Norilsk Art School student Kostay Sakhotin plays the kysakh, a Russian instrument.

Photo by A. Belonogov, Novosti Press