

An Eskimo lamp

By GRACE SLWOOKO

As a child, I use to play by an Eskimo lamp.

The Eskimo lamp in our homes as Eskimos had lots to do with our living or it meant a lot about them. So it was a main furnishing of an Eskimo home. Many a memory is recalled in the thought of one to any Eskimo. It is there by one, many a fancy sewing was done on skin, many a hunting garment was done for men to go on the ice hunts for huge sea mammals, it was the only thing to light a home and it was where the kettle was hang down, cooking all the meals to eat. The average number of those lamps was three for a home, that would keep a home heated all

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the time, so that the people stripped off practically all the fur clothing upon entering, except for some short-like garments. Cold as our climate may be out people didn't need clothing on in a room with those lamps. The parkas were taken off in the outer room. Then they would crawl in into the reindeer skin room where the lamps were. The mukluks and other clothing were taken off the first think when coming to stay.

They walk all over the floor with mukluks on only when someone die in that home.

Then in the inner room when clothings are off only with a shorts things on, they can stand up and walk around and even do some indoor games, too sometimes.

St. Lawrence Is. kind of Eskimo lamp is an oblong flat or a shallow bowl, that looks like this. It has a place for moss we gather in summer time, for a wick or where the fire would stay burning and even. The moss was gathered from tundra, dried and refined for burning and used simply by placing seal oil soaked portions along the edge of



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one side. The places for moss in the lamp were placed like two little walls to keep the moss from drifting off loose. Oil in the lamp was kept level to keep the fire trimmed. Si it was a very pleasant furnishing for an Eskimo home.

A slightly curved bone was used as a trimmer and it was always placed along the side of it. Burned moss was scraped off aside in the lamp bowl every now and then to keep it trimmed. When it is not trimmed nice, it won't give lighting as it should and it will get smokey.

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We still find chips of those lamps in the old villages when we dig for ivory. People use to go to the places where the clay of the kind is found and bring some home, so the women would form oblong and shallow bowls with two hands a take a portion in their hands big as a large

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ball and pound it with a rock all around on a straight surface as they pound them they would put in fine sand and dog hair, pounding them over and over turning them over and over until they are all smooth clay, then form the oblong bowl with two thin raised walls in one. After they smooth them nice, they would carefully put them over the kindled fire out doors in summer time and keep the fire burning until the clay bowl's look turned into the looks of a stone in some twenty minutes.

After they cool off, they would pick them up and they are ready for use. Sometimes they brake in fire, when they have not been pounded enough, as to get all the big lumps crushed.

They also would make another one for the bottom bowl. They would pound on the clay and form a deep bowl to put under the flat oblong one and did it the same way. The deep bowl had a nicely lowered rim on one side and flared up a little, so as to catch the burned oil and moss. So the oil in this bowl is thick and black, that can be used for tattowing, and that was what they used.