HISTORY

strong, a surgeon with HMS Investigator in search of the Franklin Expedition, wrote about meeting some eastern Mackenzie Eskimos, two of whom were hoisted aboard in their kayaks, in 1857. In searching for a leak, one of the Eskimos emptied his kayak, giving Armstrong "...an opportunity of seeing how well they were stocked, including spare materials to repair any disaster that boat or implements might sustain." (p. 186) Later Armstrong reported that:
The owner of the leaky kayak, as soon as his countrywomen came on board, seized one of them and pointed out to her the hole in it. She immediately procured a needle from him, and thread of reindeer tendon; and, with great quickness and cheerfulness, set about the repair, which she quickly accomplished. (p. 188).

KAYAK USE
One of the major uses of the Mackenzie kayak was in the communal whale hunt. A wonderful description of this was written by Nuligak who, having been born in 1895, was just old enough to remember the great event before his tribe was decimated by disease.
The kayak paddles bore designs in red, and the hunters' weapons were red as well. Each kayak was furnished with two harpoons of very slender wood, eight or nine feet long. To one of the harpoons was attached a kind of skin bottle, rather small and inflated with air. A long string was tied to the end of the second harpoon. A wooden disc, illiiviark, was fastened to the middle of the string, and at the end was another skin bag, larger than that of the first harpoon, and embellished by eagle feathers.

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.