

Grimacing Faces

The Tundra Times My Turn Column this week will begin the newspaper's weekly Poet's Corner column, a regular feature which will present the beautiful poetry of Alaska's people. Persons wishing to submit poetry for consideration should send it to the Tundra Times Poet's Corner, 639 "I" St., Anchorage, Alaska. Sorry, no submissions will be returned to the writer.

By Mary Jane Litchard

*Through the soft shimmering light her hard working
worned hands
gently stirred the meal hanging over the seal oil lamp.
Her man of so many years relaxed after stalking a seal
providing hot meals for the people, dividing the catch for
the village.
With the snow whirling, the dogs laid asleep.
Their stomachs and their igloo warmed once again...
for another cold winter night.
The peoples of the old times lived naturally with the land.
Never littering, never damaging, their focus was on
survival.*

*We, their remaining survivors, descendants of this
human race,
Many living in spiritual poverty deprived of past
Eskimo education.
With grimacing faces
many souls walk the streets with
lingering imbedded painful memories brought down from
the missionary days.
Punished for speaking Eskimo,
forced to learn English,
many diseases were introduced, we were nearly wiped
off..with an erase.*

*The Spirits of the past look upon the land,
with grimacing faces,
disprove the litter scattering.
Litter spread upon the land drifting off to the sea.
Some forever imbedded.
When will this ever cease?
Since we are bought Natives turned Americans,
our land became littered, damaged.
Our freedom was taken from the beginning,
attacked our very lives with prejudism,
strict laws to hinder our traditional way of life.
With grimacing faces
we pay sky rocketing prices for the food we cannot
afford.
We want our old ways back!
To live freely with Mother Nature!
To be taught of the old ways by our Elders!
Grimacing faces can be erased with love, peace and
understanding.
Wounded broken hearts healed over,
when our freedom is released.
Freedom to hunt, to pick, to speak.
The Eskimo Spirit continues to live.
Our land back to Mother Nature.
Our souls free of Human Race.
Our Eskimo Freedom is restored.
My people happy, never ashamed.
The world free of rigid laws and hate.*