

NSF Grants Ethnic Music Work

Ethnic music specialist Dr. Tom Johnston has obtained a three-year National Science Foundation grant for an in-depth report on the sound, style, history, social use and educational value of Alaskan Eskimo and Indian music.

The study has three main goals: to furnish Native song-book materials for rural schools; to preserve the unique and irreplaceable musical heritage; and to increase understanding between Alaska's diverse cultural groups.

"It is time to show," says Johnston, "that in most villages

traditional music performance is an essential part of community hall activities such as the Eskimo inter-village inviting-in and the Indian post-funeral potlatch, and not just a quaint tourist item."

The University of Alaska music department will record and film throughout the state, gathering information on song origin, ownership, connection with special dances and occasions, and songword meaning.

Linguists will aid translation for eventual inclusion in bilingual textbooks to be designed in conjunction with the College of Arts and Letters, and issued in Inu-

piak, Yupik, Athabascan and Tlingit.

"Music," states Johnston, "carries deep-rooted emotional meaning for most people, and is a strong part of cultural identity; take it away from the Native as many schools do and you do not only rob Alaska of its cultural richness but you create costly personality problems in a group which is emerging as a new and dynamic political and economic voice."

Dr. Johnston aims to bring the musical vitality of Eskimo story-dancing and Indian game-songs and ceremonial dancing

into the schools, churches, and council meetings, where they will gain prestige in the eyes of the impressionable young on whom continuation depends.

The Eskimo and Indian dancers, singers, and drummers

who prove the most knowledgeable will later be trained as rural music teaching aides by a traveling clinic. They will then function locally as music resource persons for school and community.



ETHNIC MUSIC — Dr. Tom Johnston is shown instructing his students at the University of Alaska Music Department.