

A Book Review— **Eskimo Stories** **Are Rich** **And Varied**

With the passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act and planning for the trans-Alaska oil pipeline, Alaska's Native people have catapulted into the twentieth century. Along with renewed interest among the Natives themselves in preserving their traditional cultures has come an increasing desire among other Alaskans to know more about their fellow residents.

A new book published by Alaska Northwest Publishing Company introduces the rich folk culture of the Eskimos of Seward Peninsula. **ALASKAN IGLOO TALES** is a collection of thirty-five stories passed on for generations by tribal historians and storytellers.

Historian and writer Edward Keithahn gathered the stories a number of years ago when he and his wife Toni were in the village of Shishmaref to teach school and help open a cooperative store for the Eskimos of the area.

They are strikingly illustrated with thirty-six full-page drawings by noted Eskimo artist George Ahgupuk of Anchorage, who was a young student of the Keithahns during their stay in Shishmaref.

The stories in **ALASKAN IGLOO TALES** share the universal themes and rich inventiveness common to many oral folk literatures. Yet they are unique, reflecting the special qualities of a people who have managed to survive for centuries in one of the world's harshest and most inhospitable environments.

Some of them, like the whimsical "The tree that became a man," seem to be designed primarily to entertain; some attempt to explain the origins of the Eskimo people or animals in their environment; some, like "A tale of two old women" and "When the dead man danced," are moral fables designed to teach a particular concept.

Together, they paint a detailed picture of a remarkable Arctic people, and they offer us all real insight into one of America's least-known Native cultures.

ALASKAN IGLOO TALES is available at bookstores or for \$4.95 plus 50 cents postage and handling from Alaska Northwest Publishing Company, Box 4-EEE, Anchorage, Alaska 99509.