

Alaska Native Heritage Emphasis on Bering Straits history

Students in Anthropology/History 200, being taught now at Northwest Community college by Linda Ellanna, are learning details about the local history only recently available to the public. Usually the course covers the whole of "Alaska Native Heritage," but this time Ellanna is especially concentrating on Bering Straits. She explains that until Dorothy Jean Ray, the author who recently visited Nome, did her extensive research now available in her new book much of the recording of early contacts was hidden away in Russian documents.

Most people are unaware of the very extensive contact between the Eskimos, Chukchis and Siberians; for example, the traffic between Siberia and King Island, Diomede and St. Lawrence in very early times. Also, Russian activity before Bering's famous expedition of 1741 is brought out in the class.

Ray's book, "Eskimos of Bering Straits," 1650-1898, (University of Washington, 1975) has many fascinating and significant facts which are new to the student, such as: The population of Little Diomede, as recorded by Russians in the 1760's, was 164. Big Diomede had 398 people.

Another text being used in the class is the "Alaska Native Land Claims" text edited by Bob Arnold, (AMU Press 1976). The scope of this book is far more than Alaska Native Land Claims Act itself. It has a workbook available and is suitable

for both College and High School classes.

Ellanna's class is part of the "Cultural Resource Management" series now running at Northwest Community College in collaboration with Kawerak.