

# Herbs and Teas of Native Culture

By LIBET JOHNSON

There is a new kettle brewing in old Fairbanks town, to be filled with the finest herbs and teas from off this rich land. It is the newly formed Alaskan Heritage Writers Association that shall be the hand that gathers and sifts all information and materials pertaining to the culture of the Eskimo, Aleut and Indian people, both past and present.

With this information they will assemble and categorize comprehensive files on any subject pertaining to native culture such as legends, folk tales, philosophy of life, songs, games, education of youth, hunting practices, care of poor and so on.

The full-bodied brew from these efforts will be the first complete authoritative work on Native culture. Moreover, it will be done entirely by natives.

The Alaskan Heritage Writers Association is the brain-child and lifetime dream of Mrs. Emily Ivanoff Brown, an Eskimo from Unalakleet, who taught elementary school for thirty years.

Despite a recent and almost fatal illness she recovered with amazing speed and is now immersed in the formation and organization of this group as well as in the midst of writing three books of her own native culture. As if that were not enough, she is involved in a host of other activities too numerous to mention.

Mrs. Brown received much assistance from Dr. J. Clausson who gave advice on technical matters and helped draw up the plans. His secretary, Jean Langhorn, generously volunteered to do all the typing on her own time until the project can afford to hire a full-time secretary.

In fact, Mrs. Brown has been greeted with approval and cooperation wherever she has turned for help so far. Dr. Wood, president of the University of Alaska, was highly interested and gave permission for office space to house the project, which will be a large office in the new library building.

At the present time, the members meet once a month and are in the process of organizing themselves. They will elect officers at their next meeting on December 8.

Hopefully, they will be able to hire a secretary soon after that with the funds they have been promised by the Alaska State Council on the Arts.

Eventually they hope to have

members from each village who will research and collect materials. The information will be put down in the mother tongue and then translated into English.

The files will be closed to the public for the meantime, but will be accessible by permission for research and educational purposes. The Association will also be available for consultant work.

The Association is non-profit and has no plans at the present of publishing the material for the general public.

All of the material will be printed and copyrighted before it is filed, but plans for the future may include special releases for subscribers, although this is only speculation at the present time.

Other possibilities may include the establishment of duplicate files in other libraries.

Mrs. Brown emphasizes that the Association is for the preservation of the culture, not its exploitation.

This is not a commercial venture, but a serious and scholarly effort on the part of the native people to preserve their own heritage, to record their own history before it is forever lost to the past.