

Keats featured in "Mini-documentary"

The television scene opens with a kindly looking grey-haired woman walking down one of the main streets in Anchorage.

As she stops on a curbside corner, a voice in the background says, "In the old days, people were happy all the time, helping each other."

Words appear on the screen as the woman watches the passing traffic. They indicate she is Della Keats, Tribal Doctor.

The scene fades and she is seen massaging the stomach of a young woman. She calls to a man, a doctor in a white coat, "Dr. Paton, I feel a little lump."

The scenes are part of a 60-second television "spot" on Mrs. Keats, who is perhaps the best known traditional healer in the state today.

The minute documentary on Mrs. Keats is one of four spots recently produced about Alaska Natives by the University of Alaska-Anchorage Justice Center for play on the statewide television network.

The program on Mrs. Keats has been shown extensively already as has another spot on the value of the knowledge possessed and passed on by older people in the culture.

In that 60-second spot, a montage of pictures of older Eskimo, Indian and Aleut faces is flashed on the screen with music playing softly in the background.

Then the scene changes to a young Eskimo woman who

says "I highly respect the old people, regardless of what race they come from."

As the screen shows different pictures of different elders, voices in the background talk of the values of the experiences that the elders have had and how to learn from the experiences of elders.

The segment ends with the words flashed on the screen, "Older people: they've got a lot to offer."

These two productions and two others, one about younger people, and the other featuring Adeline Raboff talking about her plans and hopes for Kiviuk, a 20th century family dwelling for many people, all seek to strengthen the identity and self-image of Alaska Natives.

The programs were first proposed by the Justice Center as a way of crime prevention, according to Libby Roderick, an assistant producer on the project.

The Justice Center's Doug Berry was the "father" of the idea to use modern technology and mass communications to support the age-old values of traditional Alaska Native society.

The Justice Center was opened in 1975 to help educate the state's citizens on a wide variety of justice-related subjects and thereby help to fight crime.

The belief behind the cultural identity series is that young Alaska persons of Native ances-

try will be exposed through television, to the values of elders whom they might not otherwise have contact with.

The short programs seek to strengthen the "sense of belonging and a sense of ethnic and cultural pride," according to a grant request seeking money for the four "spots."

According to that grant request, the Alaska Natives "may be one of the most visible victims of future shock, a condition, that while lacking scientific validation, has no lack of widely used synonyms which describe well-known symptoms that range from anxiety, hostility, seemingly senseless violence, to physical illness, depression and apathy.

"The future shock syndrome manifests itself in a belief among certain people that the world is so complex and forbidding that it is difficult or impossible to affect events which affect them."

By using television and the carefully chosen topics the hope is that Alaska Natives who are feeling cutoff from their identity can see the value of their cultural background and see that they have a "rightful and important role to play in the future of Alaska," says the grant request.

The project started out with the idea that all Native artists and craftsmen would be featured and their philosophies of their works and lives would be role models for others. But then the idea evolved into fea-

turing others in the community whose philosophies are strong about the future.

Della Keats was a natural for the project, said Roderick and she said they contacted Raboff after seeing an article on her in the Tundra Times.

The pictures of the people used in the programs on older people and younger people were obtained from Rob Stapleton, a free-lance photographer who has done extensive work in Alaska's rural communities.

The programs and the beliefs expressed in them hopefully will help to fight crime by fighting some of the bad stereotypes that people have of Alaska Natives — the stereotypes fostered by "down and outers" on Fourth Avenue in Anchorage, said Roderick.

By showing examples of the very many positive good things about Alaska Natives, non-Natives are educated and this helps keep inter-racial tensions down, thus keeping possible confrontations — and crimes — from occurring between groups.

The stereotypes of alcoholism in Natives also help prevent Natives from getting jobs because if people believe that Natives are alcoholic, they might not hire them for jobs that they are qualified for because they fear that alcoholism. Joblessness leads to frustration and leads to crime in many cases, she says.

"One of the strengths in

the Native community has always been the relationship between elders and the rest of the community. This is a bond which has been challenged under the pressures they are faced with . . . (because) this is not the way western culture has always worked," she says, adding that hopefully the television project will help to strengthen that bond.

"In the Bush, conflicts can escalate because there is no mediator. The elders have been those mediators or at least someone to listen to," said Roderick. Perhaps, if the project is successful, she says, the young might be more willing to look upon them as mediators again in the future.

The Justice Center is hoping that this four-part test will prove successful and is expected to seek funding for fur-

ther similar 60-second spots in the future, said Roderick.

The Center also has produced a full-length program on the Beaufort Sea Lease sale called "Best Interests of Sale," which weighs the process which was used to determine if oil leasing was in the best interests of the people of the North Slope.

That program will be shown on television in the future.

Another series of short television spots being planned is a series on how people cope with stress, said Roderick.