



A young dancer from King Island participates in the festival.



Fort Yukon Dancer



Nenana Dancer

## Students bring culture to university

By **BILL HESS**  
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Dance groups and story tellers from across the state were drawn to Fairbanks March 15-19, to participate in the ninth annual Festival of Native Arts. Traditional performers from King Island, Barrow, Yakutat, Wainwright, Fort Yukon, Hydaburg, Arctic Village, Minto, Northway and many

other Alaskan spots participated in the event, which was planned, sponsored and put together by Native students at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks.

Homer Badfish, a performer with the Wainwright dance group, praised the event as a great re-union. "It's nice to get together with outlying villages, and to see friends we'd

never seen for a while," he explained. "This is a great gathering from all over. We meet new people, and demonstrate what we learned from our ancestors, and we share this with the young kids. We show them how to dance, how to sing."

For Sherry Barnes of Fairbanks, the festival was an opportunity to join other Na-

tive craftspersons and artists in selling their handmade goods. "I sold a parka last night," Barnes said as she sat behind a table loaded with mukluks, mittens, gloves, chokers, and beadwork. The parka was made from mouton, which can be beaver or sheep skin; was beaded, and lined with Black Fox trim.

Barnes, who originally came

from Northway, also found the festival to be a great re-union. "I went in and watched the people from Northway," she explained. "I danced with them. I felt pretty good!"

Jim Stevens, a fifth year student in business management from Eagle and the Chairman of the Festival of Native Arts, stressed that with-

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Bert Ryan, A Tsimshian from Metlakatla, takes a moment's break from working on a mask at the Festival of Native Arts. Ryan, a student at UAF, was not trying to sell his work, he just wanted to demonstrate how it was done.

PHOTOS by **BILL HESS**

# Student volunteers made festival successful

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out the help of students, the festival would not be possible. "We have a corps of about 15 students who did all the legwork and planning," Stevens explained, "and about an additional 10-15 who volunteered to help through this week."

Stevens noted that is always the case, the students started out with a zero budget, but, largely through grant writing, were able to raise a budget of \$36,000 to help bring and house the 257 dancers and performers. The Fairbanks Native Association also with many of the dance groups, who also took part in their potlatch.

"Everything turned out really good this year," Stevens claimed. "Nothing went bad. We were able to take good care of our performers, whom we kept at the Captain Bartlett Inn."

Stevens sees the work the students do in putting on the festival as being very important to the Native approximately 400 students at the university. "The Fairbanks campus is completely devoid of anything having to do with Native culture," he explained.

Yet, Stevens would not like to see anyone but the Native students plan Native events. "I wouldn't want the university to do anything for us," he explained. "Except — maybe provide us with some dollars. We are the ones who care, so we are the ones who are going to do it right."

Next year will be the 10th festival put on by the Fairbanks students. Stevens noted the students already have started working toward that festival, and that it will be a big one.

Many hours go into making such a large event successful, and students are often already burdened with classes. "Volunteers are important to us," Stevens said. "But students come here to get an education, and their studies come first. We like the help but if any one feels he is too busy to help us, fine. We don't try to 'guilt trip' anyone."

One student who decided Native events were worth donating time to was Glenn Elliott, a sophomore from Bethel. "It takes up a lot of my time from studying," he admitted, "but I think it is im-

portant. It's here to increase the understanding of new people here, who don't really know what Native culture is like. Whatever time it takes, it's nothing."

Elliott has been involved in lobbying trips to Juneau in search of funds to promote Native activities at the university. Besides the festival, he hopes to see a revival of Tuma Theater, a dramatic program which in past years presented Native culture in play form but which was pulled from university activities. Elliott is currently carrying 12 credit hours, although he began the semester with 15. He found his time so pinched that he had to drop a three-hour English class.

Yet, he stressed that his education about his own people increases daily. "I really like ivory work," he noted, "There was a carver here yesterday. I was just amazed. I asked a lot of questions on how he did it. He told me how he made his paints. He made red by just grinding red rock into a fine powder, and mixing it with water."

Elliott lamented what he

sees as a weakening of the interpersonal relationships of traditional villages as western culture moves ever more inward, replacing story telling with television and traditional dancing with disco.

"Nowadays, instead of Eskimo dancing, telling stories and illustrating things that are

good, motivating and honorable, as Western society moves in, it is replaced with dollar values, coldness, and dances like punk rock. Values which are meaningless, which corrode our culture while they tear it up! That's sad. That's why I guess I'm taking a stand here!"