

Important resource

AN EDITORIAL FROM THE FILES OF HOWARD ROCK (In honor of Mr. Rock's Birthday which is August 10)

One of the great resources of our Native folks in Alaska is our own Native old people. Their's is the richness of life they still hold in their bosoms – to be tapped by a lot of us if we only would. If we make more effort to do this, we can preserve them for the unequalled cultural achievements of our elderly people and those of their forefathers. What they know can bring out the intricacies of our cultural heritages and they have the abilities to draw them out in dramatic form, in amusing manner, and most of all, in most interesting ways of presentation.

Try listening seriously to the old Native people. When they latch on to something that interest them, they enter into the spirit of telling what they know dramatically and intensely. When you get them started in that way, it is an experience that will not be forgotten easily.

This was the way our elderly people pass on the all-important cultural facets of our ancestors. On many occasions, there were other old folks who listened in, and when the teller strayed a bit, his colleagues were ready to correct him. That was the way customs and traditions were passed down to us as accurately as possible. One would expect that the old person who related the cultural gems would be somewhat miffed at being corrected but he never seemed to mind a bit. In fact, the listeners, the narrator himself, would chuckle all to the amusement of all present. Thus the miscue was corrected to be passed on as correctly as all experts present could make it. So what one hears about customs, traditions and other cultural ways is very much an authentic narration.

So heed your folks. I know great many things that can be most important to remember. Invite several of them to your homes, give them tea and coffee, and best of all, treat them to their own traditional foods which they love from the top of their heads to their toes. And to go along with that, give them the greatest respect they deserve. They are very precious human beings from whom one can learn a great deal about our great cultures.