

# Children Find Joy in Legend House Puppets

## Youngsters Make Their Own Puppets

By JACQUELINE GLASGOW  
Staff Writer

The legends, folk tales, stories and songs of the major Eskimo and Indian tribes of Alaska were, above all else, a rich source of entertainment for the people.

Once again, they are being used for the sheer fun of it. The Legend House Puppets, originally founded by Sally Latimer and Marilyn Bolles, is now working with a group of children from the Fairbanks Native Association.

The children, ages 8 to 12, listen to the ancient tales, make their own puppets, costume them, and then present them to the delight of other children and adults.

The Fairbanks children will perform during the June 14 University Day for Women at Hess Dining Commons on the University of Alaska campus. Plans are also in the making to present the legends at the Library Story Hour, the Fairbanks Native Center, and possibly in conjunction with Emily Brown at Wood Center.

Sally Latimer, who has also worked with the children of Ft. Yukon and McGrath, would like to expand the program and train assistants who could teach this ancient art of puppetry.

Puppets, she explained, have been used traditionally by the American Indian. The best known are perhaps the puppets of the Hopi Indians, used in the ceremony of the Great Plumed Snake.

On the Queen Charlotte Islands of the northern Pacific coast of Canada, the Haida Indians used puppetry during their ceremonies.

Displayed at the University of Alaska Museum is an ancient seated figure of wood with strings attached to the back part enabling it to nod. This wooden figure is believed to have been used in religious ceremonies by

the Point Hope Eskimos.

Another venerable puppet of undetermined age is located at Point Hope and is still used by the people in a dance ceremony during the annual Christmas celebrations. Both the head and arms of the figure can be moved by strings.

One look at the faces of the children working with the puppets is enough to convince one that the project is worthwhile. History, which can tend to be dull, springs alive in the midst of laughter, wonder, and awe.

Listening to a taped rendition of an ancient Tlingit legend, recited by Dr. Walter Soboleff, about a boy who was darker than anyone else in his tribe, the boy who was making the dark boy of the legend painted his puppet's head a richer, darker shade than all the other children's.

When he finished painting the head, he continued to paint his own hand and then his entire arm, fascinated by the fantasy of being darker than anyone else.

The children participating in the Fairbanks class are: Richie Hayward, Elizabeth Henry, Stephen Henry, Raymond Keith, Lorena Keith, Candy Keith, and Kriste Wirth.

Emma Widmark, the head of the Education Committee of the FNA, has been assisting Sally and will eventually be able to take on a class of her own.

Mrs. Latimer strives for authenticity in all areas. She likes to provide natural, native materials for the children to use in making the puppets, such as fur for the hair and skins for the clothes.

The doors of the classroom keep popping open as adult workers at the center sneak in to take a peek at the proceedings, with a somewhat wistful look and perhaps a slight regret that the class is limited to the under-twelve bracket.



MAGIC IN THE MAKING — Candy Keith shapes a puppet head for an old Tlingit legend.

—Photo by JACQUELINE GLASGOW