

# Native Cultural Heritage Being Lost by Lifestyle Changes

AMU, ANCHORAGE, AK. — The cultural heritage of the Alaskan Native and the history of rural Alaska are rapidly being lost in the advancement of new ideas and change of lifestyles.

Documents containing important information that contributes to the history of peoples and places are scattered in abandoned buildings, leaky hangars, old warehouses, and other service buildings throughout the state.

The cultural heritage of the Alaskan Native peoples is locked in the memories of the elderly. Each year more and more of these people pass away taking with them a link with the past.

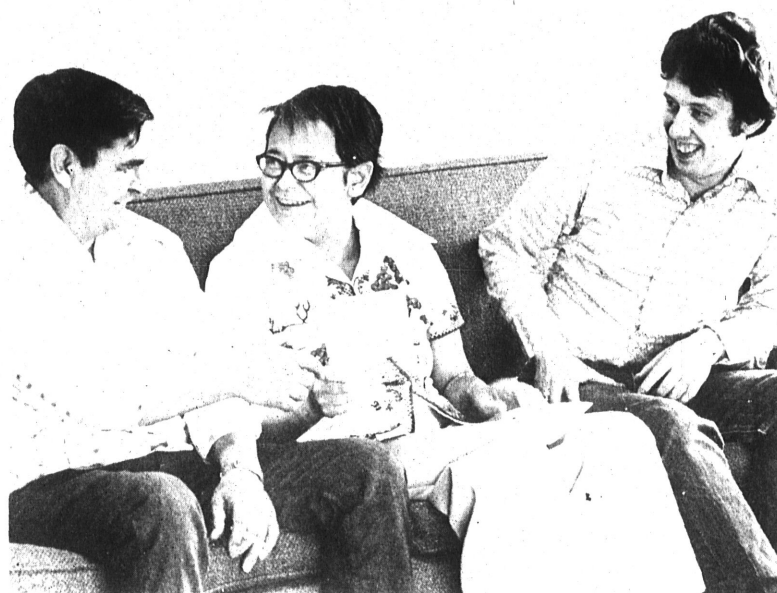
Meanwhile a generalized effort is being made by Native leadership, and corporations, federal, state, and local historical societies, agencies, and organizations to document, record, and film as much of this heritage as possible.

There are virtually no trained people able to work in the type of field research necessary or to train or instruct local people who wish to work in wilderness and village localities for the sole purpose of preserving the historical and cultural heritage of Alaska.

Alaska Methodist University has taken a giant step in correcting this situation by offering for the first time a course designed to aid persons who wish to engage in historical and cultural research in the rural areas of Alaska.

It is called Methods of Ethnohistorical Field Research, and combines the practices and principles of historical research with those of studying culture. AMU also offers its students courses related to Alaska Native history and their heritage.

For the past three years a small Anchorage corporation actively engaged in supporting and servicing field research under the guidance of Eskimo regional organizations in north-west Alaska has developed a model, methods, and procedures



PRESENTING SCHOLARSHIPS — Barbara Trigg, center, is presenting scholarships to Myron Wheeler, left, and Dwight Schnare, right, for

work in the Human Environmental Resource Services, Inc. in preserving the Native cultural heritages.

for such work while conducting research in the remote areas of the Seward Peninsula and the Bering Straits. Last year two Alaska Methodist University students were awarded scholarships by this corporation to learn first-hand some of the methods of ethnohistorical field research by being a part of the research team during the summer work session.

These students were Dwight Schnare and Mary Lou Grothe, both formerly of the Nome area.

Two scholarships are again being awarded this year, one for advanced study to Dwight Schnare and a second to Myron Wheeler, both students at AMU. They will be under the supervision of the project director Laurel L. Bland, an ethnohistorian and a member of the

AMU faculty.

This year their field experience will take them back to the Seward Peninsula, along the coast of the Chukchi Sea and up the Kobuk River valley.

Barbara Trigg, an officer-director of the corporation, Human Environmental Resource Services, Inc., and an initiator of the first organized cultural heritage preservation project on the Seward Peninsula, made the scholarship presentation to Mr. Schnare and Mr. Wheeler.

In presenting the scholarships she complimented them on their past contributions and commitment to the task being done and noted, "There is no way to describe the tremendous value of the work being done presently through the project you will be working with this summer.

"It will be at least a generation before the Eskimo people and others will really be aware of the benefits from all the materials being collected by you and others being trained to do this work.

"It is critical that this be done right now while the old people are still with us, and there are so many changes in modernizing and bringing needed improvements to our villages that the ways and evidence of the past are forever lost or destroyed.

"You have both already earned these scholarships by work you've done in the past year, and we look forward to you not only continuing to work in this kind of effort, but to share what you know with others so that many people will be trained to do a quality job according to standards that will make sure what we can still save will be useful and beneficial to coming generations who will no longer have an opportunity to gather information while it can still be accomplished.

"We are counting on people like you to gather this now."