

# Finest ever Festival of Native Arts here

By SUE GAMACHE

Native groups from all corners of Alaska and a Navajo group from Montana gathered at the University of Alaska campus to participate in the 1976 Festival of Native Arts on March 15-19.

The festival featured five nights of entertainment by a different Native group each night. The first night was dedicated to the Inupiaq, the second to the Aleuts, the third to the Yupiks, the fourth to the Athabascans, and the fifth to the Tlingit, Haida and Tsimpsian.

Dance groups from Nome-Beltz, Barrow, Bethel, Toksook Bay, Nenana, Montana, Hoonah, Sitka and the

University of Alaska danced on their respective nights.

Demonstrations of arts and crafts by each group were displayed during the intermission of each one of the evening performances.

At noon of each day the different Native groups had a blanket toss and invited all the participants and interested persons attending the festival to join in the fun.

A display of slides, pictures and crafts was set up in the Wood Center. A full-sized skin boat was also part of the exhibit.

Elaine Ramos, vice-president of Rural Educational Affairs at

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# Festival of Native Arts . . .

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the University of Alaska, welcomed all the Native groups that traveled so far to attend the festival. She stated that the preservation of our culture is critical.

Ms. Ramos emphasized how important it was to learn the Native languages, dances and cultures. She added, "if the language dies with our elders so does our heritage."

Concerning the University of Alaska administration she said that things are happening today that we once thought were impossible. Dr. Robert Hiatt, president of the university and the board of regents have put education in rural Alaska as

their top priority.

Ms. Ramos stated that her highest priority in the position of vice-president of rural educational affairs was the preservation of the culture of our Native Alaskan people.

Emily Brown from Unalakleet, but now attending the University of Alaska, spoke about the anthropologists' and archaeologists' view of the Native people. She said, "They tell me that Eskimos have no rhythm and our stories have no plots."

Ms. Brown added, "We are showing them they are wrong by our demonstrations here tonight."

Special recognition was given to Toni Jones, Al Hill and all

the students at the Special Orientation Services at the university for sponsoring the festival and finding the funds to bring people from all over the state to attend.

This year's festival was said to have had the biggest response and participation by the Native people of Alaska. It brought together an outstanding assemblage of artists and craftsmen from each of the cultural areas of the state.

Free to the public the 1976 Festival of Native Arts was a major attempt by the people of Alaska both Native and non-Native to illustrate the culture and heritage of the Native people of Alaska.



**ELIZA JONES—demonstrates net weaving during Athabascan night at the Festival of Native Arts.**

**Photo By JENNIFER ORTIZ**