

"I may not agree with a word you say but I will defend unto death your right to say it." — Voltaire

# Tundra Times



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## Editorial—

## Deputy Emil Notti, A Good Choice

Emil Notti, former head of the Alaska Federation of Natives, was appointed by Gov. William A. Egan to the post of deputy commissioner of the State Department of Health and Welfare last week. We think the choice is a good one which could prove significant as time goes because Notti has a rich background of administrative experience some of which took no patsy to operate. He has also been in close touch with common people and knows their problems his new post can help to alleviate. Most of all, he knows the complex problems of the native people and the injustices they suffer even under the very agency into which he has been appointed.

Perhaps on that basis alone, significant progress can be achieved in the dispensation of services not for the native people alone but for every person who is poor.

Along with his superior, Commissioner Frederick P. McGinnis, the team should influence fairness in the distribution of services and efficiency in the distribution of those services. The two top officials of that agency know each other well and this should be an asset to both of them in a cooperative effort out of which the state should benefit.

## Original Tanana Chiefs—Article Reveals Minutes Of Chiefs' 1915 Meeting

When the present organization of the Tanana Chiefs of Alaska organized in 1962, they mentioned in their incorporation that theirs was the first meeting of the Chiefs of the Tanana since 1915.

Today, the minutes of that original 1915 meeting are available in a fascinating article by Stanton H. Patty published this month in the Alaska Journal.

This fine quarterly on the history and arts of the North is published via the Alaska Historical Society. Unlike most scholarly publications, it is well written, lively, and includes priceless pictures of Alaska's past and present.

The spring edition of the quarterly this year features color pictorial study of the art of the school children of the village of Eek. The artwork done by the children in this small village at the mouth of the Kuskokwim has received wide attention of late. Last year, the Smithsonian Institution requested 200 works by Eek's young artists.

Paul Forrer, the teacher at Eek school, who is credited with an art program which encouraged this explosion of color and form, wrote the article for the Alaska Journal.

Accompanying his article are

twelve pages of reproductions of the colorful, bright, talented pictures produced by the children of this tiny village - along with snapshots of the young artists and their teachers.

Obviously, Eskimo children are capable of extraordinary art work with proper direction. The unstructured "happening" art program of the Eek school can provide a model for other village teachers.

Other articles of interest to native readers are a true story "A Seal for the Government", a tiny incident which occurred during the five year reindeer trek from Alaska through Canada in 1930 to 1935.

This is a story about the generosity of the Eskimo people in Alaska and their way of life during a bad winter.

The Alaska Journal is a new publication of impressively high quality. Their Spring 1971 volume is only the second of what promises to be a fine magazine.

Copies can be bought at the present time at newsstands in Alaska and the Northwest Territories and subscriptions can be ordered for the quarterly from the Alaska Northwest Publishing Co., Box 4-EEE, Anchorage, Alaska 99503 for \$7 per year.

## Parents: Speak Your Native Language to Children—Tragedy of Dying Native Languages

By MADELYN SHULMAN  
Staff Writer

NOTE: With this article, the fourth in a series, the Tundra Times concludes its examination of Alaskan native languages today on its highest note—the Eskimo people.

In several schools in the Yukon-Kuskokwim, native teachers conduct first and second grade classes in Eskimo. Bilingual education has come to Alaska—painfully late and centered in the Bethel area of Alaska where the native language is its strongest.

The program in Bethel, Akiachak, Nunapitchuk and Napakiak begins first graders with courses in reading, writing, math, social studies and science in the native language. Then, for one or more hours per day an English teacher teaches English.

Educationally, the children are not held back while they learn a second language. By the time, after three or four years, their program is mainly in English—they should have mastered the second language, as well as have a firm base in other subjects in their native language. By high school, these students should have a pride in their language and culture that the traditional U. S. school system could not give them.

At the center of the Eskimo

Language Workshop, the University of Alaska project which prepares materials and trains teachers for the bilingual programs, is Irene Reed, one of the original six students who studied Eskimo in Dr. Michael Krauss's first class in the language in 1961.

In the workshop, talented and trained Eskimos translate stories, text books and other school materials. Also, they write original stories and books in Eskimo, to provide a wide and varied school literature for their students—a literature that has been adapted to the culture of the students.

For the school year which begins in September, the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Division of State Operated Schools plan to expand the bilingual program to nine new schools. As the school year ends, the results of the bilingual program are pouring in—children who learn faster, better with more parental concern and support than in the all English curriculum.

Expansion of the program is mainly limited by the facilities available to train more teaching aides and teachers. The University of Alaska Eskimo Language Workshop is also responsible for developing and producing the teaching materials for the program, though teachers in the schools often develop their own as well.

The Yukon Kuskokwim area has the largest number of Eskimo speaking people in Alaska—15 or 20,000. The dialect of the area is Central Yuk, one of three Yuk Eskimo languages in Alaska.

The other two are St. Lawrence Island and Pacific Gulf Yuk. This latter is dying, reports linguistics Professor Krauss. Only a few children of the Prince Edward Island, Kodiak Island and Cook Inlet speak their Yuk language. On St. Lawrence Island, Yuk is still strong, however.

The approximately 800 residents of Savoonga and Gambell on St. Lawrence Island speak Siberian Eskimo—the same language spoken by the approximately 1,000 Eskimos who live on the other side of the 40 mile Bering Strait—in Siberia.

Cold war politics has divided these two groups who until 1948 often visited freely between their villages and attended feasts and celebrations in each other's lands.

While the language on St. Lawrence is strong, it could probably be invigorated by contact with the mainland people. This summer, Michael Krauss is studying the St. Lawrence Eskimo language under a grant from the National Science Foundation. He hopes to establish a writing system for the language to enable

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## Letters from Here and There

### Writer: Witchcraft Ridiculous

May 26, 1971  
Bethel, Alaska 99559

Sirs:

Reference: "Eskimo Dance: Witchcraft."

Having just read May 19's Tundra Times with the very interesting big black headlines, "Eskimo Dance: Witchcraft!" Personally, the whole affair is extremely ridiculous. I can only laugh at the parties who branded Eskimo dancing, witchcraft, and even to go so far as to threaten a trial on top of that!

Eskimos have been there in Kotzebue hundreds of years in a land so desolate where recreation was impossible out-of-doors, so this being the case they met indoors and danced to do away with some of the monotony in that way of life. Now, the part about the Shaman or witchdoctors being present was true. So what? Where else was there to go? The dances probably took place in the Kashim where the men lived.

In an age such as this we so-called adults know that shamanism and witchcraft has been brought under considerable control. No wonder the younger generation is blamed for a generation gap between age groups. Can anyone see that this generation gap is really the grownups' stupidity? Shaman and witchcraft! Really!

Just because Shaman in the days of old used to be at those dances does not mean that now the dances are cursed by them. And those dances tell stories. They do not make magic! They do not denounce God! What's happening of us adults!

I understand the \$80,000 from the federal funding is for an Eskimo cultural program.

Studying the Eskimo culture out of books and other writings can become pretty boring. But to perform some of the cultural aspects of a people like Eskimo dancing, learning by memory their legends and stories would greatly add to an individual's character just by knowing how to do these things. I've yet to see someone from the Lower 48 who claims to have lived among Indians but had nothing to show for it except material things.

I don't understand why the clergy and some townspeople there in Kotzebue proclaimed that outrageous reason why they were against Eskimo dancing. Instead they should be proud that the young do not want to forget their forefathers and for the outsiders who want to learn something about the people.

About the teachers, they must be a special type of people to take an interest in the young. I'm glad there are people like them still around where generation gap means nothing to them, including the singers and dancers! Thank you.

About that petition which was signed by a few natives in the community. They, the natives, probably did not care one way or the other!

I protest the petition and the discrimination induced on the native children of Kotzebue and those non-natives who are not too proud to learn the ways of the Eskimo!

Surely, there are far greater problems in Kotzebue that need attending to than this problem, such pollution and what have you. Bring it to trial, and this will be another monkey trial with all due respect to the accusation.

Too many times in different areas of the world people have been pushed into extinction not physically, but mentally, and morally. The accusation in Kotzebue against teaching Eskimo dances is a beginning of a

different form of extinction. Surely if God has permitted Eskimo dancing all this time who are we as mere men to stop it?

I'm an Eskimo. I like white men's ways of thinking, their ideas, their goals. I enjoy what white people do, but sometimes I don't really like some of the things they bring with them. Don't get me wrong. I like their idea of religion, but I haven't branded it untrusion—just yet! I don't aim to. But when outsiders, regardless of the fact how long they've been here, will tell me how to live on my rightful land, then you have something else coming and that idea is a good argument on any subject that you outsiders can think of.

I of course would argue in the Eskimo language! By the way, "Eskimo Dance: Witchcraft!" came from the white men's mouth, not the Eskimos'!

John Active

### Plenty Room for Other Practices

Washington, D. C.  
June 2, 1971

To the Editor  
Tundra Times:

Reference the "witchcraft" dispute in Kotzebue: Though far removed from that town in distance and other ways, I'd like to suggest that there's plenty of room for accommodation between strictly Christian practices and those of other—older—cultures. If this were not true, we so-called Christians would not be reading the Old Testament, and would celebrate such events as Christmas and Easter in far different ways than we do now.

Having danced with the Eskimos at Kotzebue, I say: If this be witchcraft, make the most of it!

Sincerely,  
Tom Myer