

ENEP'UT CHILDREN'S CENTER HUMS ALONG

Enepe'ut, 'Our House'

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Enepe'ut is an Eskimo word that means "our house." Enepe'ut is also the name given to a children's day care center in College, Alaska, that borrows more than its name from the Eskimo culture.

Early studies in anthropology followed by marriage to Pat Afcan of the Eskimo Language Workshop at the University of Alaska, led Mary Afcan, originator of the center, to ponder the Eskimo way of child-rearing.

The results of her thinking crystallized in a much needed day care center for very young children of working parents. Opening in November of 1971, the youngest child at that time was six weeks old.

Most of the children are under five, many are still in diapers, with a few older ones coming in after school. Like Mary's own children, the older ones pitch in and help with the youngest. The total enrollment is 28 children and the waiting list is very long, but Enepe'ut finds it hard to say no to a child.

Howard Rock, Tundra Times editor and his staff visited the center recently and were treated to a delicious lunch of buckwheat pancakes, bacon, and juice.

The small people of Enepe'ut quickly accepted the guests as part of their surroundings, venturing forward to make friends and share their world.

In the midst of teeming activity — milk spills, diaper changes, friendly swapping of baby-bottles, hiding under cardboard boxes, and lost rhythm band instruments — Mary Afcan explained her philosophy.

"In any kind of natural human community, you are likely to have all ages of children under the watchful eye of a group of adults, learning and doing things, being 'trained' by the men, women, and older children."

"You certainly have this in a village situation: groups of families, extended families, all living together in close communication and interchange. In the Eskimo culture," she explained, "there is very definitely a lack of punishment."

"They indulge the children completely, with the result that the children grow up to be contributing, responsible adults, just as their parents were with them." At Enepe'ut, based on the Eskimo culture, Mary said, "We don't spank children!"

When asked if it was true that the Eskimos rarely punished children, Howard Rock answered, "My father spanked me twice



BACON GALORE — Children are helping themselves to bacon to go with their buckwheat hot

cakes. There was much childish noise & spillage of milk as the tiny tots ate their lunch.



PEEKABOO — A young child is peering at the camera through a hole in the playroom.



BUCKWHEAT CAKES AND BACON — Siobahn Wescott, foreground, is enjoying buckwheat hotcakes and bacon for lunch at the Enepe'ut Children's Center.



EDITOR MEETS GOAT — Tundra Times editor Howard Rock is petting a young goat at the Enepe'ut Children's Center "barn" where tots enjoy meeting the two goats, two geese and a duck.



NATIVE CHILD — A Native child is enjoying lunch with his tiny friends.